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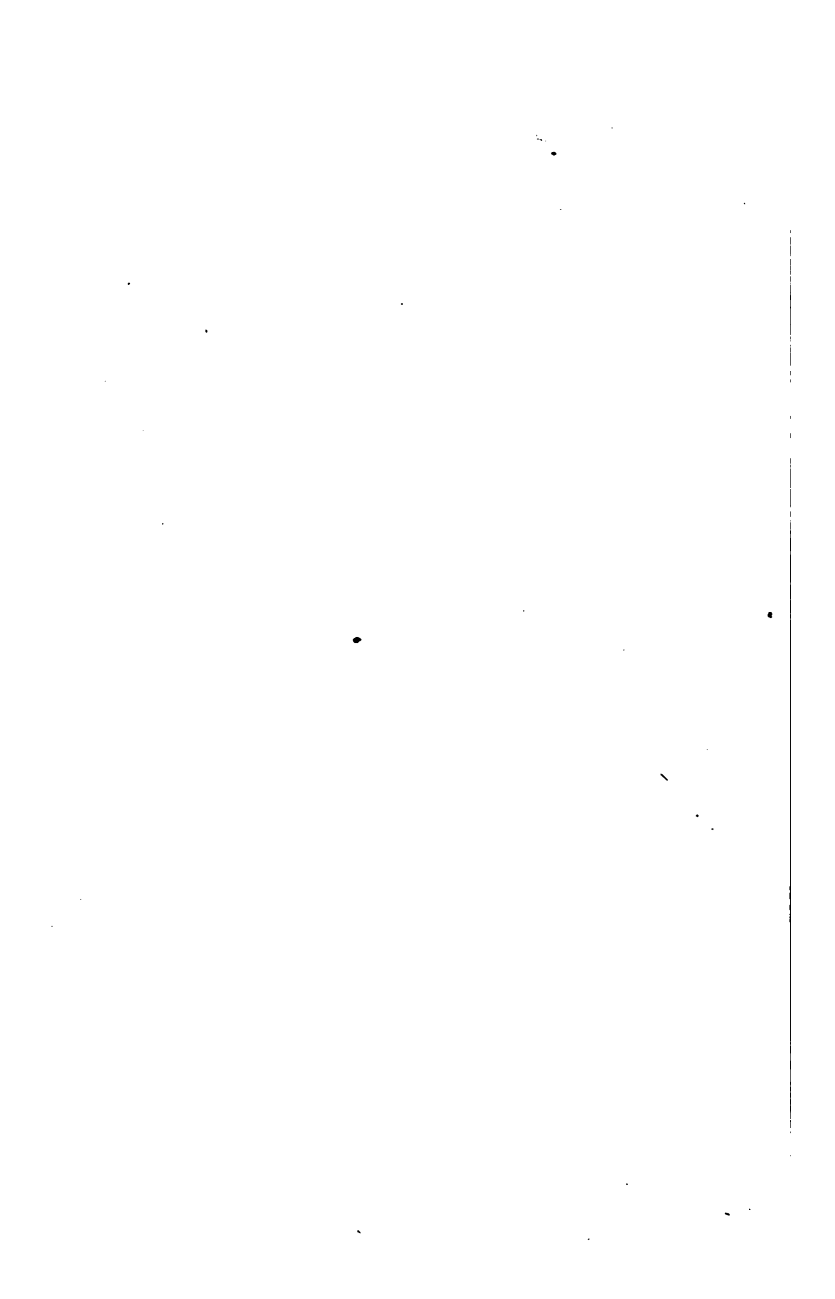
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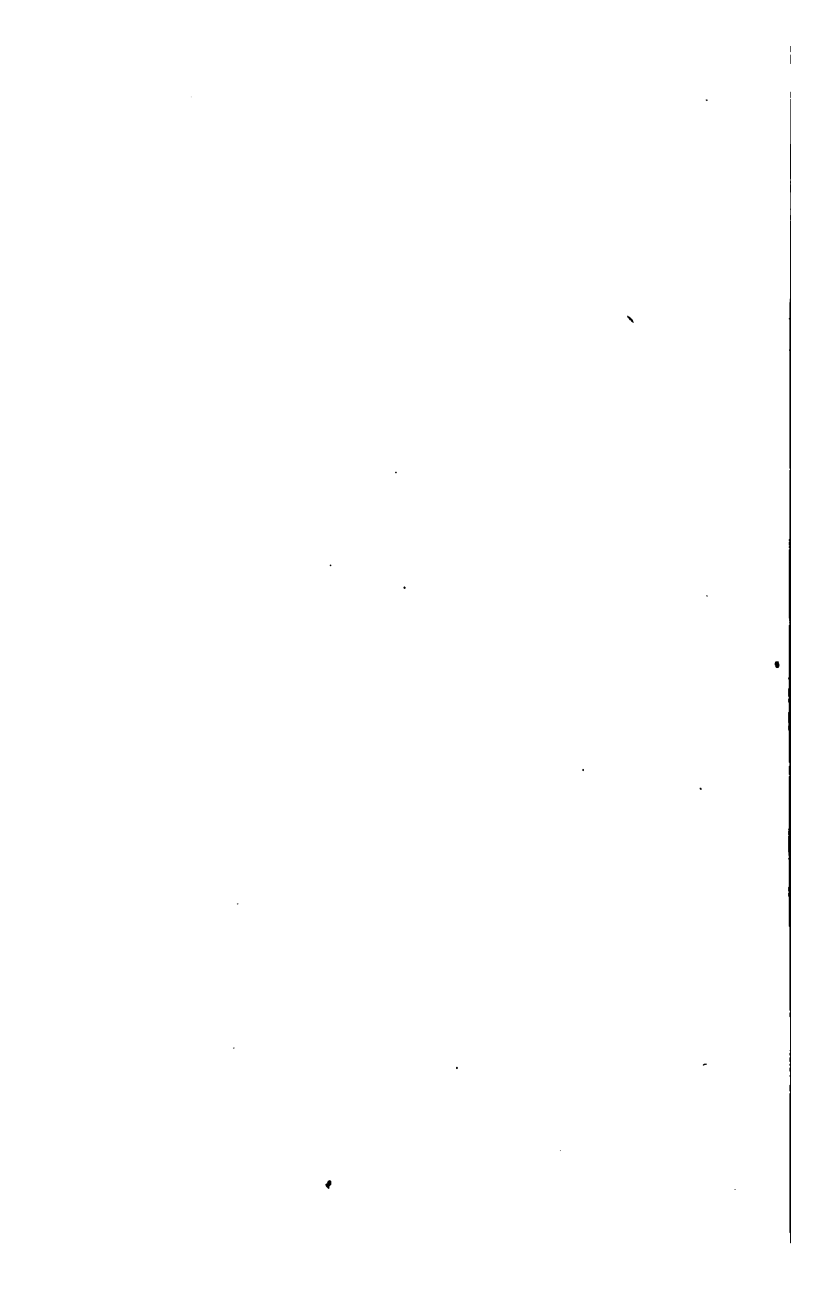




SHORT SERMONS

ON THE

ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.



SHORT SERMONS
ON THE
ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF REPTON SCHOOL
AT THE TIME OF CONFIRMATION.

BY THE
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PREFACE.

IN the following Short Sermons, I have touched on subjects which do not usually form part of a course of instruction for Confirmation. It appeared to me that there was good reason why, in addition to the ordinary routine of preparation, a simple statement of the broad elementary truths on which Christianity rests, should be laid before those who were about to claim the full standing and privileges of Christians.

I believe that there is an essential connexion between Christian doctrine and Christian practice; in other words, that God does not permit men to enjoy the advantages and rewards of the Gospel life, unless they know and receive Gospel truth. The character of the worshipper is determined by that of the object of his worship, and an incomplete

notion of God necessarily implies a false standard of morality. And if some among us have been tempted to make a losing compromise with the infidelity of the age by surrendering essential features of the revealed character of God, I fear we shall soon see the effect of their error in a moral deterioration, if not in themselves, yet certainly and speedily in their followers and the heirs of their doctrine.

But besides this, there are circumstances, unhappily notorious, which seemed to me to make such a statement necessary at the present time. There has never indeed been a time at which Christianity has not been assailed from one side or the other: and a plain declaration of the truth, as far as God has enabled us to receive it, is never without its value.

Just now, however, the assault seems to come from such a quarter, and in such a form, as to make it a peculiar and pressing danger for that class of hearers especially to whom these Sermons were addressed. The candidates for confirmation in a School Chapel consist in large part of boys who are about to pass in a short time to one of our great Universities; that is to say, they will very soon be in a position to have the most difficult and important questions affecting their faith as Christians brought before them as subjects of ordinary

discussion. In one at least of the Universities, it may be said, the regular course of study, admirable as it is for the purpose of intellectual training, is open to this objection, that it encourages the habit of free speculation at an age when the mind is evidently unprepared for so severe a trial.

It surely cannot be thought premature or inappropriate, if I have taken advantage of a time of serious reflection, to set before my pupils a simple view of the general grounds on which the Christianity of the Church of England claims their allegiance.

And it is desirable at the same time that educated men who have children to bring up and desire to see them established in the truth, should carefully consider the direction of that current of thought, which is strongly bearing on the minds of students at this time; that they should know, too, to what extent it has already carried some of the most eminent and authoritative teachers in our own communion.

The direction of the current has indeed been apparent for some time past. Any one who will take the pains to review the principal theological works of the last twenty years, may trace its progress. We have seen during that period in the writings of powerful and popular

authors, an open denial of the doctrines of Atonement and of Eternal Punishment: a rejection of Miracles as an evidence of Revelation, and an avowed purpose of demolishing what they have termed Bibliolatry, that is, an exaggerated respect for the Bible: a feeling which they deplore as a fruitful source of error. And this last purpose has been pushed to the extent of throwing doubts on the special inspiration of the Bible, and consequently on the reality of all external Revelation.

The collection of "Essays and Reviews," which has lately attracted very general notice, can hardly be said to have contributed anything new to the movement. It has only summed up the progress made in this direction to the present time, and given a more explicit indication of the end to which the movement is tending.

Indeed, the publication of this particular volume will have rendered a great service to the cause of truth, if it only rouses us to the apprehension of what is really going on in men's minds about us. It declares, with great boldness and plainness of speech, that the very foundations of the Christian faith are in question. It is no longer the precise form of a doctrine or the wording of an article that is under discussion; but whether Christianity may

not be a delusion or an imposture, whether we have received a revelation from God at all. It certainly seems to me to be an opinion common to most of the writers who have contributed to this remarkable volume, that the Bible is in no special and distinctive sense such a revelation.

The attitude of fixed attention, and eager inquiry into which the Church of England has been startled by this publication, may be regarded as a promise of lasting benefit to be derived from a temporary disquietude.

On the other hand, it is doubtless an indication of a real and a serious danger. These writers, and others of the same school, have greatly extended the latitude generally and fairly allowed in our Church to inquiry and discussion. And thus they are in a position to propagate their opinions more widely and with greater authority than others who have hitherto considered their doubts on these same subjects an insuperable bar to a position in the Church.

It is not to be supposed that those who hold these opinions can long maintain their present position. In fact, it is not permanence but movement which they aim at, for the present at least. Already the early leaders of the school have been displaced and thrown

into shade by bolder and abler speculators. And these in turn will have to endure the fate which awaits all revolutionary leaders. They will either be pushed forward to conclusions before which they now falter; or other men, with stouter hearts and more logical minds will put them aside and go on their way without them. They have stated the premisses clearly enough; if they shrink from drawing the conclusion, others will draw it for themselves: they have worked up the piece to the very close, and other hands will be found—already * one giant hand has been put forth—to strike the last chord. They have surrendered the principal doctrines of Christianity: they have repudiated the evidence to which its Founder and His followers invariably appealed; surely there is not much left to them, as Christians, worth contending for.

In the meantime we may learn one or two useful lessons from a consideration of this controversy, and the opinions and statements which have been brought out in its progress.

1. I think it warns us never again, as perhaps we have been tempted to do, wilfully to shut our eyes to the real difficulties of our belief. This class of writers will have done

* See "Westminster Review," Oct. 1860.

good service to the Church and to Christianity, if they have only taught us that the wisest and fairest way is to accept and admit the difficulties which do exist; if they have made us feel that, after all due allowance for the exaggeration of our opponents, there are questions to be answered, and objections to be met, and that these should be accounted for as they arise, in a complete and thorough manner.

It is time, too, that our children, if they are to enjoy the perilous privilege of intellectual cultivation, should be warned of what lies before them, that they may never have cause to reproach us with keeping back from them the true state of the case, and teaching them as universally acknowledged truth that which is, in fact, with many a disputed question. Let them be made to know, in due time, that the whole of that system which we teach them, and every part of it, is liable to be questioned or denied, and that by men of the highest ability, character, and position, in our own Church.

And if we, the appointed ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, desire to keep the religious teaching of the age, nay, of our own children, in our own hands, we must be ready with an answer to all the objections, so skilfully

framed, and so boldly urged,—an answer ready, clear, and decisive.

We now and then see the sons of Christian parents straying hopelessly into unbelief. May not this be, in some cases, because they have not found, where they had a right to look for it, a satisfactory answer to the deeper inquiries of their minds? We want no new doctrine, no new evidence; only that the doctrine should be applied, and the evidence stated in the form that is best adapted to meet the wants, the doubts, and the difficulties, of the present time.

2. There is one satisfactory conclusion which we may draw from a review of the present discussion, namely, that all those objections which arise in men's minds *à priori* against Christianity or its evidences, all those antecedent difficulties which suggest themselves to those who, in Butler's words, "form their notions of God's government on hypothesis," are very much the same in kind and in force at this time as they ever were. We have nothing new to fear on this side. The determination which some men express, that no evidence shall induce them to receive the doctrine of atonement, or of eternal punishment, as repulsive to the moral sense, and inconsistent with their con-

ception of the Divine character, is not stronger now, nor is it based on stronger grounds, than it was when Butler examined and replied to it.

Nor has the advance of modern science, though this is much insisted on, made any real difference in the state of the question concerning miracles as an evidence of Christianity. However complete our knowledge of the laws of nature may hereafter become, it will not establish any greater presumption than that which has always existed against a miraculous or supernatural interposition. And certainly, as an evidence of Divine presence and power, a miracle, if we believe in it as a fact, is of more weight in proportion to the fulness and accuracy of the knowledge we possess of those natural laws which are overruled or superseded by it.

3. The most pressing difficulty of the present day seems to consist in the numerous objections urged against the authenticity and inspiration of the Bible, on historical, critical, and scientific grounds. These objections, however exaggerated by the enemies or the faint supporters of Christianity, undoubtedly require careful and prompt attention.

We must remember that the New Testament is so pledged to the Old, that, as far as we can now see, they must stand or fall together. Perhaps the time is now come for the Law and

the Prophets to pass through the same exact and pitiless examination as that to which the Gospels and Epistles have been subjected during the past half century. We shall have no reason to complain if the result is the same in both cases.

The New Testament has passed through a searching ordeal. No work of man has ever stood the test of so severe a process. Friends and enemies have worked together in the scrutiny; indeed, the enemies of Christianity have been doing the work of the truth as effectually as its most zealous friends; and the undeniable result is, that the books of the New Testament stand on higher ground, and are invested with greater authority, than at any former time.

Let us not fear, but rather hope that the writers of the Old Testament will meet with the same rigorous criticism, and that the various questions suggested by history, philology, and natural science, will be fairly met and fully answered. Only let the work be done on principles of sound scholarship, accurate knowledge, and impartial judgment, and we will not refuse the help even of those who do not love the Bible nor desire to find it true; but ignorance, carelessness, and prejudice, are as little to the purpose in the attack as in the defence.

For my own part, I feel a confident persuasion that the consequence of the present movement will be to establish the truth and authority of the whole Bible as the Word of God, on a firmer basis than ever.

In the meantime it will be useful to glance at the present position of avowed scepticism in this country. I have before referred to a paper of remarkable interest and ability, which I believe may be fairly regarded as the latest manifesto of a school which openly denies the fact, and the possibility, of a revelation from God.

In the first part of that essay the author engages himself in a lively and vigorous assault of the Christian faith. And so far his style is both confident and powerful. But when, towards the close of his argument, he ventures to take up a position of his own, though it is only sketched in the most general terms, the confident tone remains, but the power seems to fail him.

It could not be otherwise. For it is easy enough to collect, combine, and enforce the difficulties which must from the nature of the case attend a divine communication; but it is a task which demands more power and more courage than even this writer possesses, to de-

scribe fully and fairly the state and prospects of mankind without a revelation. It cannot be done in any manner that shall not be revolting to the moral sense of the most careless reader. And so an author who has many bitter words of contempt, and ridicule, and denunciation for the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, strangely alters his tone and lowers his voice, and speaks in constrained and guarded terms, when he is forced to say something, however vague, of his own religious position. He knows that the age is sceptical, but he knows also that the spirit of this country is not ripe for blank infidelity. To shake the faith of others is a task which he undertakes gladly, and executes with alacrity and vigour; but he seems to falter and hesitate when he comes to a statement of his own creed. He is too wise to scare his readers, as he inevitably would do, by a naked avowal of a system which appears to be without faith, without hope, without God.

The following passage* contains, I believe, the leading thought of modern scepticism. It is the sole positive ground, as far as can be learnt from this Review, on which the writer bases at once his objection to a revelation, and

* "Westminster Review," Oct. 1860, p. 323.

his hopes of a true and reasonable Philosophy. This thought is already in wide and general operation. It is likely to be followed out more fully in the rapid advance of scientific research, and so to exercise a powerful influence on the religious opinion of the coming generation. It therefore deserves the careful consideration of those who wish to prepare their children for the actual trials to which their faith will be submitted.

“Such is the manner in which it has been found necessary, by the most advanced thinkers within the orthodox pale, to explain and modify the doctrine of inspiration. It will be of use to inquire, what is the power which has driven them to this necessity? We may answer, that it is the advance of the conception of development. Step by step, the notion of evolution by law is transforming the whole field of our knowledge and opinion. It is not one order of conception which comes under its influence, but it is the whole sphere of our ideas, and with them the whole system of our action and conduct. Not the physical world alone is now the domain of inductive science, but the moral, the intellectual, and the spiritual, are being added to its empire.

“Two co-ordinate ideas pervade the vision of every thinker, physicist or moralist, philosopher

or priest: in the physical and the moral world; in the natural and the human, are ever seen two forces—invariable rule, and continuous advance, law and action, order and progress: these two powers working harmoniously together, and the result, inevitable sequence, orderly movement, irresistible growth. In the physical world, indeed, order is most prominent to our eyes: in the moral world it is progress: but both exist as truly in the one as in the other. In the scale of nature, as we rise from the inorganic to the organic, the idea of change becomes even more distinct; just as when we rise through the gradations of the moral world, the idea of order becomes more difficult to grasp. It was the last task of the astronomer to show eternal change even in the grand order of our solar system. It is the crown of philosophy to see immutable law even in the complex action of human life. In the latter, indeed, it is but the first germs which are clear. No rational thinker hopes to discover more than some few primary axioms of law, and some approximating theory of growth. Much is dark and contradictory. Numerous theories differing in method and degree are offered, nor do we decide between them. We insist now only upon this, that the principle of development in the moral as in the physical, has been

definitively admitted: and something like a conception of one grand analogy through the whole sphere of knowledge has almost become a part of popular opinion. Nothing could more strikingly show how deeply this has penetrated, than the consideration of the two books, which of late years have excited the most lively interest in English thought.

“Just as Mr. Darwin has introduced the principle of growth in one of the most rigid laws of the physical world, so the reception given to the book of Mr. Buckle has proved that public opinion was ripe for the admission of regular laws in the moral.”

The argument implied in this passage is based upon two propositions, which may be shortly stated as follows:—First, where the action of law and of progressive development is ascertained to exist, divine interposition is impossible; as the Reviewer elsewhere writes, “When once the idea is grasped of continuous advance in the human mind, it excludes that of arbitrary breaks and unnatural illuminations: he who understands the meaning of law, whether laws of matter or laws of mind, treats with contempt the idea of miracle in either.”

Secondly, the moral world, as well as the physical, is regulated by laws, and is subject to progressive development.

From which two premisses it follows that miracle, revelation, divine interference in any shape with the affairs of men, is impossible.

1. Of the two propositions from which this conclusion is drawn, the former rests on the enormous assumption, that the more we become acquainted with the laws by which the world is regulated, the greater reason we have to deny the active regulative energy of God. In proportion as we see greater evidence of power and wisdom, we are to conclude that the machine acts by itself, and that the Almighty and All-wise has no power or no right to interfere with its working. "The Father of eternity may step in once," says a writer of the same school, "but it must be once for all." With the same breath a man admits this wonderful fabric of nature to be a fact, and denies the possibility of a miracle.*

From the same facts we draw a very different conclusion. When we see in the world about

* Of the same kind is the opinion that God does not or cannot employ natural agents in their ordinary working as instruments of His moral government, and that consequently it is absurd to offer either prayer or praise to God in reference to things which are produced according to recognised natural laws. This is a plausible theory, and they who put it forth are sure of the assent of unbelieving and unthinking men, but it is a surrender of the whole principle of the Government of God.

us every day new instances of design, wonderful and unexpected adaptations of cause and effect: a constitution of things apparently unconnected and heterogeneous, all working together in subtle and harmonious order, we regard it as the work of a present, living God. The so-called "laws of nature," are the order in which He is now pleased to operate. Believing Him to be Almighty (and who ought to have so high a conception of Omnipotence as the true man of science?) we believe that He can in a moment, and by a mere exercise of will, change all this. Let Him but speak the word, and all this marvellous frame will collapse, and a new universe, with new forces, instruments, and agents, come into being. There have been convulsions of nature "utterly immeasurable and inexplicable by any faculties we now possess:"* why may not such convulsions occur again at any moment? It is surely not less reasonable in the presence of an alleged miracle, to "give praise unto God," than to reject the strongest historical testimony to such an event, on the sole ground that the *Almighty* cannot interfere with His own laws.

We have no desire to put away the Creator from us. We are thankful to believe that He who made the world continues to sustain and

* Sir R. Murchison.

regulate it in every part of its machinery, the least as well as the greatest. We have no difficulty in believing that the most common of natural agents, working after known and certain laws, may yet be used by Him for the discipline of His moral creatures. Nor, so long as the existence and Sovereign Power of God is admitted, need we shrink from believing that while He has given us the power of observing the laws by which He ordinarily works, He has reserved to Himself the right and power of working, when He pleases, independently of those laws, and according to principles which we have no means of investigating.

2. And if the Reviewer's first assumption is wholly without foundation in reason, the second is notoriously at variance with certain and acknowledged facts. The implied assertion that the results of moral investigation are analogous to those of physical science is not only wide of the truth, but is directly and palpably contrary to the truth. The progress of natural science is daily bringing to light new illustrations of the order, law, and beauty, which reign throughout the material world. Does the Reviewer seriously assert that the investigations of political, social, and moral science show the same results? He admits, indeed, that we must be contented with "some

few primary axioms of law, and some approximating theory of growth." But can he point even to these? Can he show that there is, in fact, any tendency in human nature towards moral amelioration? Can he name any race or nation which has passed through a course of civilisation, apart from Christianity, without sinking gradually and surely into a state of moral exhaustion and degradation?

The Reviewer is premature in referring to Mr. Darwin in support of his first proposition. He is still more unfortunate when he alludes to the reception given to the book of Mr. Buckle as an evidence in favour of his second; for Mr. Buckle's work contains the strongest testimony against it. It is from beginning to end an admission of disorder, instead of an illustration of "orderly movement."

His statistics of sin and misery, his tabulated statements of moral irregularities, his averages of crime—is it seriously proposed to compare these with the discoveries of the exquisite order and harmony of nature which result from the labours of a Faraday or an Adams? The natural philosophers will scarcely thank the Reviewer if he has given his readers the impression that their theories of the natural world are similar in nature and result to Mr. Buckle's account of the moral.

Christianity has no reason to fear a comparison with such a philosophy as this. Men will not soon be induced to believe that the perfect harmony which is observed in the physical world is a sufficient proof that God has not interfered, or cannot interfere, to remedy the disorders of the spiritual. Still more difficult will it be to persuade men who can read and reflect, that the moral world is already so far on the way to perfection that such interference is not necessary.

And though writers of this school are very ready to enjoy, without scruple and without acknowledgment, all the advantages which they possess from living in a Christian age and a Christian community, they cannot blind others to the simple fact, that the Bible is directly or indirectly the standard of morality in this country, and that the fluctuations of the public opinion on questions of morality are regulated by the degree in which the Christian faith is realised and carried into practice.

The two systems may be shortly compared in their objects and principles thus: Christianity proposes to supply the remedy for the disorders which moral science has investigated and registered. Christians believe that the Word of God which called the universe into being at the first, and instituted that wonderful

order in which the material world consists, is the instrument by which it is His will that law and harmony shall be perfectly restored to the moral life of mankind. The religion of Jesus Christ recognises in man, as the distinctive properties of his race, the instincts of faith, hope, worship, and offers them an object on which they may be worthily exercised. It thus aims at the perfection, not of an ideal man, to be possibly produced by the way of "natural selection," after infinite ages of "irresistible growth," but of every individual person, man, woman, or child, who comes under its influence. Its regular, normal, certain tendency, is to make a man love God supremely, and his neighbour better than himself.

It supplies a motive and a power to subdue and destroy those dispositions of our nature which mar the happiness of men and of nations, and reduce reasonable creatures below the level of brutes, such as lust, avarice, malice; while it imparts all those affections which are good and Godlike, peace, goodwill, reverence, gratitude, and love.

The new philosophy, for which the Reviewer invites us to abandon Christianity, bids us at the outset extinguish hope, faith, and the instinct of worship, forasmuch as no worthy

object of these affections has yet been found. No wonder the invitation is expressed in ominous words. "The sense of despair," he writes, "the shudder of the mind, the tearing up of dear associations, the agony of the family, have darkened the picture of every religious convulsion; it must be endured."

God is declared to bear no part in the concerns of men, to have no authority over His material creatures, no interest in the moral world. Man is but the highest present development of animal life. The species is advancing by infinitesimal steps towards a higher position in the scale; but for the millions of living, dying men and women who ask what is to become of them, there is no answer of hope. In the self-evolving process of the moral nature they are failures to be cast aside and perish, while the favoured few in each generation are selected as links in the chain of progressive improvement. There is no gospel here for the poor, the ignorant, the self-convicted sinner; no promise to encourage, no motive to stimulate, and not a whisper of love either in heaven or earth to throw a ray of light into the darkness of this suffering, sin-stricken, restless world.

There are difficulties in belief, often exceedingly distressing to those who, nevertheless,

cannot but believe; but they are utterly insignificant compared with those which surround such a system as this. It is sometimes hard to believe what God has revealed of Himself, but it is infinitely harder, requiring indeed far more than average credulity, to believe that God has made us what we are, with these capacities for faith, and love, and worship, and not revealed Himself to us at all. The difficulties of believing may be a thousandfold greater than they are before they induce us to adopt so dreary, so repulsive, so impossible a system.

And our strength, after all, is in this one word, *we believe*. They who take the simple course of rejecting all revelation, flatter themselves that they get rid of all doubts and all perplexities: but, in fact, they only postpone them,—their difficulties begin where ours end. Meantime we shall be content to wait, satisfied that if this counsel be of God, no man can overthrow it, and confident that, as long as England has the free use of the Bible, infidelity will continue to be regarded as a folly and a disgrace, and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be found by many a yearning heart, and many a restless mind, to be still THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

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SERMONS,

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SERMON I.

THE TRUE GOD.

JOHN, xvii. 3.

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God."

To know the true God is the sum of all knowledge—it is essential to the wellbeing of mankind. Without this knowledge all worship is vain, and all efforts for the elevation of our moral nature are thrown away.

Therefore, for you who have made up your minds to live a life of worship, and to aim at moral conformity with God, it is necessary, first of all, to be sure that you have the true idea of God. I invite you to-day to give your attention to this great and serious subject; look at it as a subject about which it is your

right and your duty to be satisfied once for all. Come to it with reverence and humility; but do not shrink from it. And if you already have felt any difficulties in what you have heard, or read, or thought about God, consider that now is the time to bring these difficulties to the light, and set them to rest, if so it may be, for ever. The questions which present themselves to a boy's mind in its earliest working, and which he is disposed to put aside as too simple and familiar for serious consideration, are almost sure to contain the germ of those thoughts which make the real difficulties of belief in after life. They should be met as they arise, and so the truth will be strongly and permanently established in your minds.

And when I encourage you to draw near and see this great sight, do not think that I forget the bounds which God Himself has set to our thoughts, or propose presumptuously to intrude into those things which He has kept secret. Two things must be borne in mind while we pursue this subject, 1st, That the history and the present state of the world show very plainly that there is no natural faculty in man, by which, unaided, he can attain to the

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knowledge of the true God. 2dly, That it is yet evidently the will of God that we should know Him, because all His direct communications and dealings with men have had the avowed object of declaring to us His real character.

While, then, on the one hand, we carefully avoid the foolish presumption of those who amuse themselves with idle speculations on the Divine nature, measuring it by the span of their own conceptions, and forcing it into verbal definitions, we may yet, as indeed we are bound to do, examine, and ponder, and realise with all attainable clearness of apprehension, that character of God which He has set before us in various relations. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever."

You must, then, lay down this rule for yourselves at the outset—all that you can know of God is what it pleases Him to teach you in one way or other. Your own understanding is to be faithfully and conscientiously employed in receiving and interpreting His revelation. But it must not presume to sit in judgment upon

it. It is not safe to trust to your reason or your moral instincts in judging on such a matter; to say, "This or that must be true, because my reason declares it to be so; or this or that is certainly false, because my moral sense protests against it." What you want is truth, independent of your own mind—a word and a law by which your reason and your moral perception may be regulated and taught to judge aright.

See, therefore, and consider what God tells you of Himself. He speaks to you in His works—as the Creator and Preserver of the world in which you live; and He speaks to you in His word—as *your* Maker, Master, Saviour, Judge. His absolute essence no man may comprehend—He has revealed Himself to us only under certain relations. You may therefore regard Him, as in fact men do regard Him, in two very different lights. You may think of Him as He is in relation to all His other creatures—and you may think of Him as He is in relation to you.

I assure you, it makes all the difference in the world, in which of these lights you learn habitually to think of Him.

So long as men can put aside their own concerns with God, and regard Him only as the Creator, Sustainer, Governor of the material and animal world, there is little difference of opinion among them—no difficulty of belief. All acknowledge that He is of “infinite power, wisdom, and goodness,” and that He exercises these attributes in maintaining the wonderful order to which His absolute decree appointed all His creatures at the first.

We are every day, as you know, finding fresh reason to adore the wisdom, power, and goodness of God as the Creator, for every day is adding to our knowledge of the several parts of the great system in the midst of which we live; and every step which science takes leads to new illustrations of the universal law of order, according to which all the creatures of God hold the place and do the work for which He appointed them. The telescope on the one hand, and the microscope on the other, are continually enlarging the ground of our observation: while our minds are still bewildered with the vain attempt to conceive the vast dimensions of our own world, we hear of other worlds and other systems, and again, of systems

and worlds beyond, far transcending our own in magnitude, already countless in number, and overwhelming the mind of the observer by the sense of infinity. At the same time, the power which is given us of examining the minutest forms of animal existence, and the most intimate structures of organic life, is daily extending, beyond the reach of description or imagination, our opportunities of examining and ascertaining the method after which it has pleased the Creator to work.

And the regular, unfailing result of all the discoveries of human science is to give us fresh reason to adore the power, and the wisdom, and the beneficence of God.

Here and there we may meet with those to whom these discoveries of the wonderful laws by which God works, the beautiful harmony of creation, serve as a plea for unbelief; suggest that so perfect a mechanism needs no present Director; that a system so complete, if it is not self-originating, may be regarded as at least self-supporting and independent.

But, in general, the more men learn of the works of God, the more disposed they are to recognise His presence, and His controlling,

regulating, sustaining will. And they to whom it is given to have an insight at once wide, and deep, and comprehensive into the structure of the universe, enjoy a singular satisfaction in observing the exact order which is maintained throughout, the perfect obedience which all His creatures render in their respective places to this will. From the almost invisible tribe whose world is a drop of water, to the vast bodies that whirl through space in countless circles, all have their appointed place, and work, and structure, and all fulfil with unerring precision the law of their existence.

You may thus contemplate God, as presiding over a beautiful and perfect system, with satisfaction, with calm enjoyment, it may be even with indifference, as a mere bystander at a brilliant spectacle.

But think of Him as He is *to you*, and suddenly His whole aspect is transformed; all your feelings are changed. You can no longer find the enjoyment of an indifferent spectator: uneasy sensations arising out of your peculiar relations with God disturb your mind and agitate your heart. You are oppressed when you feel His presence, and His eye upon you. You

have lost the view you lately possessed of God, that aspect of regulative wisdom and parental love which He bore as the Director of a world of order and beauty; the form of His countenance is changed; He is not to us as He is to the rest of His creatures; we must find new attributes, new names for Him.

How is this? Why is it so easy, so pleasant to look upon Him as the God of nature; so hard, so terrible to think of Him as our God? It is because of the one great secret, that the conscience of mankind has to tell: our state is exceptional; we are sinners; we alone have broken the law, and departed from God; while all other creatures, as far as we can see, have kept the law of their being, and continue to give glory to their Maker. Therefore, while they rejoice in the presence of God, we shrink from Him in disgrace.

Hence arise feelings of guilt, of shame, of fear, of hatred at the thought of God; and hence those attributes of God which can only be conceived as existing in Him relatively to a fallen, rebellious race. That which is wrong must be made straight; disorder cannot be tolerated in His kingdom: you have learnt this

even from His natural government. It is a guilty conscience which taught us, even before He revealed it, that he is a *holy* God, a *just* God, a *jealous* God: nay, "our God is a consuming fire."

Here, then, is the pressing matter for us; not what God is to the angels, to the heavenly bodies, to the animal kingdom; but what He is to *us*: to you or you, who are now longing to know how to get near Him, to serve Him and to love Him.

When this view of God presses on our sight, we feel that we cannot spare a thought for His creative power, for His beneficent government.

He is holy, and our hearts tell us we are unclean.

He is a Ruler who requires order and obedience, and we are rebels.

He is just, and we are sinners.

And let it not be said that in thus describing what God is to us, we are giving Him a new character, or investing Him with qualities inconsistent with His absolute perfection. We believe that He is eternal, immoveable, unchangeable—not to be affected or altered by the act of any of His creatures—the change is

in us; and that change has caused those very attributes of God, which are in themselves lovely, admirable, adorable, to be to us the grounds of our terror and aversion. It is the very brightness of His holiness which is destruction to sin; it is the perfection of His government which will endure no disorder; it is His infinite love before which rebellion and ingratitude shrink confounded and abashed.

And it is no new idea that the same agent may be life to one, death to another. What is there in the material world more pure in itself, more beneficent in its operations, than light? We have read of human bodies which had lain for many centuries in the darkness of the grave, without a sign of decay, in the apparent freshness and purity of life: yet on the first admission of the light of heaven, they have failed under the test and crumbled into dust. Does this suggest to us the idea that light has changed its nature, and is become a malignant agent of evil? Does it not rather add a new testimony to its inherent purity and its activity for good, that as it is in the ordinary course of things a source of life and health to all that come under its operation, so is it essentially

destructive of everything that would introduce into its kingdom disorder and corruption?

And it is a truth, sad and humiliating no doubt, that we are in the presence of God as these dead bodies. He is to us as the pure light whose searching ray we cannot endure for a moment.

When we are safe in the eternal kingdom of God, restored to our right place in creation, never to fall from it more, seeing God as the angels see Him, yet with feelings which angels will never share, then will His majesty, and His glory, and His Fatherly love, occupy all our thoughts and fill all our hearts.

But now, and especially now that we want to know Him truly, that we may also know how to serve and please Him, it will be right and wise to concentrate our thoughts on that character of God which He presents to us—a character which is plainly and consistently revealed not only in His written word, but in the order also of His natural government.

He is a holy God, and He is a just God. But I hear some one remonstrate, "May we not also say a loving God?" I must beware what I say. "God so loved the world, that

He sent His only-begotten Son to die for the world." Yes, "*In this* was manifested the love of God." *In Christ*, He is a loving God too, and those who are in Christ know it full well; He is their very life: but apart from Christ, to those who will not believe, who refuse to accept His offer of reconciliation, to the mere child of Adam, how can I say that He is a God of love? He has never revealed Himself so to them. When they have been left to their own devices, they have never imagined Him such.

I find in the theology of the world gods of power, wisdom, art: gods of pleasure, lust, and passion, but no God of love.

If He is a God of love to the natural man, where are the evidences of it? They must be sought either in the acts of God towards men, or in their instinctive feelings towards Him.

In the actual government of God I find many traces of displeasure, but no trace of that love extended to all mankind as such, which He specially promises to those who believe in Christ. Unless, indeed, we are contented with the bare permission to share with the lower creatures the enjoyments of animal life. There

are some, it is true, who argue as if this were enough for them ; but, in so doing, they voluntarily abdicate their higher nature and privileges, and disclaim all title to a special place as the children and heirs of God.

In the history of the world we find one long-continued tale of strife and confusion, suffering and disease, and the inevitable, inexorable conclusion of death summing up the story of each man's short life, and yet a God of order, of wisdom, of mercy, ruling over all. It can only be that He is letting us gather the fruit of our own sins, teaching us to know what a grievous thing it is to break one of the laws of the Most High. At one time by sending swift destruction on the world, at another by letting men alone in their sins, God reveals Himself to man in displeasure, and not at all in love, except in that universal, all-embracing offer of pardon and restoration which He makes to us in Christ.

And I fear we shall find no better evidence of the love of God if we question the natural heart. The instinct of every child of Adam teaches him to fear God and to avoid Him. I speak of "the only true God:" for it is this instinctive fear and aversion which has led to

all idolatry, all false conceptions of God's character. They do not like to retain God in their thoughts, and so they make for themselves gods more congenial to their own nature and their own desires, and set them up in their hearts to worship them.

In what I have now said, I believe I have given you, as far as it goes, a true representation of the character in which God reveals Himself in Scripture, as well as in that actual daily government under which we all live.

When He made man at first, He made him good and upright, like His other works—He gave him a place, a work, and a law. And He attached a penalty to the breach of that law.

When man broke His law, and forfeited his place in the scale of creation, God did not utterly destroy him, but ordained a way by which he might be restored, and from thenceforth treated him at once as a fallen being, and as one to whom restoration was possible. Throughout the Bible, mankind is spoken of as being actually under God's displeasure, and God is described as He is in relation to a fallen and rebellious race. His goodness and His love are only represented as

they are exhibited in the material world, or in *His own chosen people.*

This is a great and a serious matter. I commend it to your thoughtful consideration, with a hearty prayer that the Holy Spirit will take of the things of God and make you understand them—showing you both how the truth is, and how right and fit it is that it should be so—teaching you first of all to regard God as a holy God and a just, and giving you assurance that you will yet find in Him a living, inexhaustible fountain of Love, if you are willing to return to your right place and become His children again in His eternal Son.

SERMON II.

WHAT IS MAN?

Ps. viii. 4, 5.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

THERE is a necessary connection between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. The revelation which tells us the truth concerning God, tells us at the same time the truth concerning man; and the more clearly we apprehend the complete idea of the Divine character, the more correctly do we estimate the true position of human nature.

The will of God, as far as it is known to us, is the standard of right; and we cannot even make the attempt to ascertain this, without, at the same time, measuring ourselves by it. And thus, even if there had been no express declaration on the part of God, of what man is in

His sight ; if the Bible had been only a revelation of God Himself, it would have taught us and made us feel what we are.

And this surely it is essential that we should know. We cannot seriously and intelligently set about the work which God has given us to do, without understanding who and what we are, what we are made for, what we may aim at and hope for, what are our powers and capacities. For as, on the one hand, many perplexing questions are suggested to us in regard to the nature and attributes of God, so also very many doubts arise from the mysterious, complicated nature of mankind, the strange mixture of good and evil, the capacity for the highest excellence and happiness, with the sad tendency to sin and wretchedness, the inward consciousness of an immortal nature, and the bondage under which the whole race lies to the wants and infirmities of animal life.

Indeed, it is possible that the nature and the actual condition of the human race is as often a ground of unbelief, as anything that is directly revealed of the character and government of God.

I shall try, by the blessing of God, to put

this question before you, in such a manner as to help you in your purpose of devoting yourselves worthily to the service of God—to lower, perhaps, the estimate you may have formed of your actual condition; but to raise greatly, I hope, your thoughts of the capacities of your nature, and the ends for which you are what you are.

Our thoughts on this point will be simple and practical. The general question, “What is man, and to what end was he placed on the earth?” involves the yet more direct and important question for each of us, “What am *I*, and why am I where I am, and what I am this day?”

Men are very keen in their inquiries, and very distinct in their conclusions, when they set themselves to investigate the nature and constitution of other orders of God’s creatures. From the structure of a plant or an animal, and from the position in which it is placed, they show the end for which it was created, and take delight in observing how exactly it is adapted to fill the place, and to accomplish the purpose, for which it was evidently appointed; and, in most cases, as soon as we have made ourselves sufficiently

acquainted with the subject under observation, it is not difficult to assign to it its precise position and work.

But this is not so easy when we come to examine ourselves: and that not only because it is naturally less difficult to draw correct conclusions about others than about ourselves, but because there is evidently something in the nature of man which baffles inquiry, and defeats every attempt which philosophy can make to assign his proper place and natural functions.

Still we need not despair. God has given us faculties by which, if we use them aright, we may attain to a knowledge of the truth respecting ourselves as well as respecting Him; and the same revelation which gives us that knowledge of the true God, which is life eternal, enables us at the same time to know ourselves.

Now that which chiefly perplexes us when we come to examine and describe the nature of man, is the great variety, the actual contrariety of his qualities and endowments. We may, indeed, dwell wholly on one side or the other of his nature, and regard him either as the most

beautiful and excellent of the works of God ; “ so noble in reason, so infinite in faculties, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals ; ” or, on the other hand, as feeble and corrupt, hopelessly disabled by a kind of moral paralysis, incapable of any course of life that is truly and permanently good. For, indeed, there is that in our nature as it is now which makes either view possible. We *are* capable, on the one hand, of taking our place among the higher orders of God’s spiritual creation, while we *have* a fatal tendency to sink to the level, and below the level, of the very beasts of the field. It is the compound nature, containing both these capacities, which makes us stand alone, a marvel and a riddle in the midst of the works of God.

Let it be granted that we have many things in common with the animal creation ; in other words, that when God placed man upon the earth, to be its lord and master, He made him subject to the conditions of an earthly existence : so that to some minds our bodily organisation, our necessities, our appetites, our passions, suggest the humiliating thought that we may be, after all, but the last link in the chain of progressive animal life.

Yet we are taught that man was made in the likeness of God, that, even in his present manifestly imperfect state, he can converse with God and receive communications from Him. Nay, that the eternal Son of God took upon Him this, our material nature, that He might renew us after the Divine image, and restore us to our proper life.

And we have an inner witness that strongly confirms the revelation of God, and loudly protests against the degrading thought that we are but animals of a higher class. Even without the help of revelation, all those who have been able to rise above the world of sense, have agreed in believing that we have in us also a spiritual life, the germ of an eternal existence.

Accordingly, the true account of human nature, and the only account which satisfies our reason and moral instinct, is that which we gather from the statements of the Bible. Man is the result of a separate act of creation, occupying his own peculiar place in the world, distinct from the order of spirits, in that he is designed and organised for a life of sense on this earth; equally distinct from

the highest order of animals, by the possession of mind, soul, and spirit, and the capacity of communion with God now and to all eternity. The body, with all its conditions and attributes, is to be regarded as a temporary abode, an earthly tabernacle, as St. Paul describes it; the *spirit* is the *man*, and in the full enjoyment of the spiritual life consists the realization of the proper nature of man and the true end of his being. For in speaking of a being so compounded as man, in whom a higher life and a lower are so strangely mixed, we are surely bound to call that his true nature which is his best nature—that the true end of his being which is its highest end; and the work of Christian philosophy is to separate, as far as may be, the spiritual from the animal nature, to purify the soul from the dross of sensuality, to forget that man, the living soul, is tied for a time to this body of death, and to realize beforehand the freedom, and joy, and happiness of the spiritual life, which shall be fully experienced when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, and when we take possession of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This is the thought

which gives life to those glowing words of St. Paul, when he declares that henceforth he will know no man after the flesh; yea, if he have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth he will know him (under that disguise) no more.

But there is another truth which must be brought out into strong light, and kept well in view, if we desire to form a true and complete estimate of our own nature. Man is not what he was; there are marks of ruin about him; the very struggle which we are conscious of between good and evil, the very capacity for the highest excellence and happiness on the one hand, or the lowest misery and degradation on the other, united in the same being, indicate *disorder*. God surely did not create man so unlike all His other works, so great and jarring a contrast to a universe of order, with so many gifts and qualifications fitting him to be the likeness and the glory of God, and yet always coming short, going astray, ignorant of his proper aim, or utterly unable to attain it—a shame and a wonder to the other works of God, instead of their pride and excellency.

God did not surely design that the flesh

should be always lusting against the spirit—the animal nature in a thousand ways rebelling, and domineering over the spiritual. There must have been a time when the whole man was subject to the law of God, and fulfilled the end of his being; and something must have intervened, some disaster must have occurred, to disarrange the beautiful work, and leave it in its present imperfect, disordered condition.

The word of God declares to us what this disaster was, and our consciences admit the truth of this authoritative declaration; and it is to man, as thus fallen from his true place, and yet capable of being restored to it—disorganised, yet capable of being brought again to order—that the revelation of God's character and His law is addressed.

We must not lose sight of this, lest, on the one hand, we forget what is our true condition and highest life, and so contentedly rest on a level with the beasts that perish, or, on the other, forget that we are fallen, and delude ourselves with the vain hope that, as we are, without a new exertion of God's restoring power, we can please Him and satisfy the high requirements of our being as men.

We are, indeed, to remember that, for the present, our work is to be done here, in the flesh, and through the flesh. We are to use the present world, and to enjoy the present world, to the honour of Him who made it for us, and placed us in it; but here or hereafter, our true life, because our best life, is spiritual, and our members, as St. Paul speaks—that is, our bodily and mental constitution, reason, and affections—are to be employed as instruments in the service of the spiritual and eternal.

Here, again, I have only been expressing in another form that view of our nature which is presented to us throughout the word of God. Is not, indeed, the whole Bible, as far as it is a revelation to us of our own true character, a history of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, whether as it is displayed in the heart of an individual man, or as it is brought out in the history of families, nations, churches?

The words of the Lord, when He lays down the broad distinction, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” and the repeated assertion of

His apostle, St. Paul, that the two natures are essentially distinct and contrary the one to the other, are but a summary of Divine truth, as it was before embodied in the history and experience of all God's servants.

Now, try to make this doctrine your own, let it help you to shape your thoughts aright on the great question between God and yourselves. You see the necessity of gaining a knowledge of the true God: consider whether it is not also necessary, if you are to serve Him in the right way, that you should get a distinct apprehension of the nature He has given you, the place He has put you in, the powers He has furnished you with, and the work He requires of you. That which I have been considering as a general question is of the nearest concern to each of you, especially to those whom I am immediately addressing.

It is a subject which is within the comprehension of every one of you, and which bears as directly on the daily life of any boy of fifteen or sixteen years of age in this school, as on that of the mature man in the great world.

You have to bear in mind—

1. That you have in you faculties and powers

by which you may exercise and enjoy a life, such as that of the angels, with God, and like God. May I not assume that every one of you is conscious of this,—that he feels the pulsation of this life even now within him, and knows that if he will follow the leading of the Divine Spirit, and set his face in the right course, he will attain to the complete realization of it?

And I know that you are all sadly conscious of tendencies and impulses only too active, which are at work to draw you in the other direction, pressing you downward, and tempting you to forego the glorious restoration which is offered you, and to content yourselves with the short-lived enjoyment of an animal existence.

Remember, again, that is the true nature of every creature which is its best nature—that the true end of its being which is the highest end.

Therefore beware of a life of *sensuality*—beware of a life of *selfishness*—beware of a life of *vainglory*—beware of allowing yourselves to find your place, your work, your reward, in this world, and among men. As long as you

do this, you are voluntarily descending from your high place—nay, relinquishing your true place—and acquiescing in the humiliation which has been prepared for you by the enemy of God and man. Use this present world, enjoy thankfully the springtime of life, with all the gifts of our gracious God. He permits even the unthankful and evil to find pleasure in the world; He rejoices that His own children should do so. But never for a moment consent to recognise in any worldly enjoyments or engagements the true work of your life.

Beware, too, of resting content in the exercise of the highest faculties of your nature on temporary and worldly objects. Your reason and conscience are given you to enable you to know God, and understand His communications; your affections are designed to lead you to Him, and to connect you with Him. It is an abuse of your nature if you allow any mental or moral faculty to find its chief end and employment in any earthly object whatsoever.

Bear in mind, further, that you are naturally incapable of fulfilling your real work; that you are under God's displeasure, in need of for-

givenness and restoration. This implies strong feelings and strong exertions; it is this natural condition that gives scope to prayer, to faith, to hope, and that makes the Christian so different in character and in life from another. He is ever in a state of conflict, increasingly sensible of the body of death which cleaves to him, discontented with what he is, ever striving to rise to a higher level, while the other is letting himself go with the stream, easily and dreamily subsiding to a lower level. But the one is only trying to play his right part *as a man*, the other is wilfully transforming himself into something far lower than man.

Look about you—is there one among you who is evidently working after a higher life—who *prays*, who *thinks*, who *controls himself*—who encourages in himself those habits and tempers which are like Christ, and strives to get rid of all that is unholy and unlovely in God's sight?

And is there another by his side who lives a life of pleasure, who flatters himself in his own eyes that the way to enjoy life is to reject the high things for which God has destined him, and be satisfied with the portion, the work, and

the pleasure of a mere animal life? If you see two such among you, judge between them, not which is the better, which the wiser in the long run, but which of these two has learnt to know his true nature and the true end of his existence.

SERMON III.

SIN.

1 JOHN, iii. 4.

“Sin is the transgression of the law.”

SIN is that which has brought us to the state in which we find ourselves—which has marred the work of God, and set mankind at enmity with Him. It becomes us, therefore, to consult the Word of God, and to question our own hearts, that we may be able to form a right conception of sin—know what it is—notice its sure effects, and thankfully apply the one effectual remedy which God has provided for it.

I must endeavour, with God's help, so to treat this grave subject, that while your attention is drawn to the general character and bearing of sin, you may not forget your own close personal concern in the matter: that whatever is said of sin as the universal disease of mankind, may be felt to be true of your own

sin, and lead you to think with shame and sorrow on every act, and word, and thought, which your own conscience at each stage in your spiritual growth pronounces to be of the nature of sin.

I. Of the origin of sin, as of evil in general, we can say nothing. Whence came the will and the power that could interfere with the work of the Almighty, no man can tell. It is one of the secret things of which philosophy has many times tried to suggest an explanation, but always in vain, and always to her own loss. We must let it alone for ever.

Scripture, too, is absolutely silent on this point. The existence of evil is assumed in the story of the fall, "The Serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field."

II. But that there is such a thing as sin—let us be sure of this—and that it really exists as it is described in Scripture; that is to say, as a disease introduced into our nature since the creation of man, as involving guilt, and meriting punishment.

However familiar this account of sin may be to us, however ready we may be to accept it as the true account, there are undoubtedly many

who refuse to accept it. And, indeed, it is a strange and wonderful statement, not to be received without full consideration.

No other order of God's creatures, as far as we can observe, is liable to any such condition. Other animals follow the instincts of their kind in many various directions; and we call one cunning, and another bold; one cowardly, and another cruel, borrowing names for them from our own vices; but no man thinks of attaching the idea of sin to them or to their deeds.

In man alone the Scripture declares that sin exists; that it is not part of his original nature; that it is universal; and that it implies guilt. And the conscience of mankind bears direct and conclusive testimony to the truth of the Word of God. No nation has yet been discovered in which there is not a recognised distinction between right and wrong, apart from any external laws or institutions, and in reference solely to some rule of which conscience is the exponent.

III. What, then, is sin?

"Sin is the transgression of the law."

This is one of those texts which we are tempted to put aside as mere truisms. But

the simplest truth, though it may be long laid aside and almost forgotten, will find its use at last. And these words are now of infinite importance for our purpose, and with a view to the present direction of thought amongst us. I wish I could make you feel their full meaning and point.

“Sin is the transgression of the law.”

Then we have a law,—a law proper to us, as moral beings, as men ; and the transgression of that law is sin. Other creatures of God, too, have their laws, proper to their kinds, and they do not sin, because they do not transgress their own laws.

The law of our moral life, like all the other laws of God, is framed by God and declared by God ; it is the expression of the mind and will of God as it respects mankind ; of the conception which He had formed when He said, “ Let us make man.” However communicated to us, it is this law by which our lives are to be guided, it is the transgression of this law which is sin.

It is, therefore, only a perverse ingenuity, and an unwise delusion, which would make a man's own conscience the highest appeal in matters

of right and wrong, which says, "that only is sinful to a man which his own conscience condemns." Think of the fluctuations in this standard—how it varies according to age, country, temperament, education,—how, even in the same man, it will change its measure from day to day, with the circumstances which surround him, and the emotions of his own heart. Think, too, what tricks a man can play with his conscience, how utterly unfit he is to be trusted with the key of that which is to regulate his eternal destinies.

You cut at the root of all morality, and you violate the universal analogy of nature, if you say that the measure of right and wrong is in yourself. The other animals, indeed, follow their own instinct, and do not sin, because their instinct is in harmony with the purpose and the law of God. And man, the moral being, will then have a sure inward guide in his own moral instinct when he has gained the final victory over sin, and when his conscience shall keep true and perfect time with that external will of which it is at present the imperfect witness.

As man now is, the Bible declares, and rea-

son assents to the declaration, that the law of God is our rule of right and wrong, and that the transgression of that law is sin.

Let conscience hold its proper place, and do its proper work in our moral life. It is the witness of the law of God. It bears witness, true or false, according as we use it, and we are responsible if it leads us astray. It is capable of judging aright; it can and does recognize that which is right, and true, and beautiful; it knows the voice of God when He speaks to it, and is bound to give His message to our hearts.

The apostle confidently appeals to it, "by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Even the heathen have this inward witness to an established law, and will be judged according to it.

As a measure of right in this secondary sense, and as the exponent of the will of God, conscience admits of various degrees of accuracy. There are weak consciences, and there are consciences seared as with a hot iron. There are those who, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, have their consciences highly exercised

in the discernment of good and evil; that is, come near even now to read and interpret the law of God according to its real purport and His complete will: there are others whom God in His anger has given over to a reprobate mind, "giving them statutes which are not good, and judgments whereby they may not live."

But in general, and in every particular case, it is the positive law of God, read by us in the acts of His providence and in the word of His revelation, and interpreted to our hearts by His own Spirit, which determines the right and the wrong.

By this law we shall be judged; the transgression of this law is sin.

Such was the sin of Eve, by which a sinful nature was entailed upon her seed; and such is all sin and every sin, whatever be its peculiar form and character.

And there is no practical difficulty here: the servant of God will not often find it hard to determine what is, and what is not, sin. What are called difficult cases of conscience are, in fact, of very rare occurrence, and even

for them the Bible supplies us with an easy and certain solution.

Practically to you, in your daily life here, the law of God is well known and clearly defined. Unless you are grossly dishonest to yourselves and tamper with your consciences, you find no difficulty in particular cases in knowing what is right or wrong,—in short, what is *sin* in God's sight.

But, remember, that if years of sensuality, falsehood, hypocrisy, shall hereafter have so warped your moral standard, that it no more tells truth, but calls good evil, and evil good, that will not alter the eternal truth.

The mind of God and the law of God is constant, and this is the unalterable rule. By this you will be measured and condemned, and the first witness against you will be your conscience; not that feeble and false utterance of a disordered heart which you have wrongfully placed on the throne, but the conscience that once spoke the truth to you; the first remonstrance—the early voice—which would have led you right, and you would not hear it nor be led by it.

IV. Notice now the principal effects of sin on the constitution and condition of man.

The first is, *Estrangement* from God.

It was the highest and noblest privilege of man as the latest work of God, that he should enjoy free communion with His Maker; that he should be able to hold intercourse with Him, and that he should find his chief happiness therein; the immediate effect of sin was to break off this intercourse, and until the cause of interruption should be removed, to make it impossible.

And this estrangement is mutual. It exhibits itself on the part of man in a sense of shame, attended by a fear of God unknown before, and even an aversion to His presence and His voice. Adam hiding among the trees of the garden when he heard the voice of God calling to him after his sin, is only a fair representation of the manner in which mankind naturally shrinks from the contemplation of the perfect ideal of God—a God of power, holiness, truth.

On the other hand, sin has necessarily displeased God, and brought upon man the effects of His displeasure. The language of Scripture is very clear on this point. From the day on

which God pronounced the sentence of labour, sorrow, and death upon Adam for his sin, He has uniformly declared—speaking after the manner of men because of men's infirmity—that He regards the sins of men with sorrow, displeasure, anger. And this way of speaking is nothing more than the intelligible expression of the essential nature of God as it bears upon moral agents.

While we still leave alone the question of the origin of sin, we certainly cannot form any satisfactory notion of the character of God except as a Being essentially repellent and intolerant of sin.

Mutual estrangement therefore,—fear on our side, displeasure on the part of God,—is the first effect of sin.

Another fruit of sin is *Guilt*.

This is to some a hard saying: that we should be born with a disordered nature, and yet be responsible for the effects of this disorder, that we should be incapable of keeping the law of God, and yet be liable to punishment because we do not keep it.

It does, indeed, seem hard; but remember that we are dealing with a subject in which all

is strange and mysterious, and there are difficulties on all sides. Consider that if sin, which is the transgression of the law of God, does not involve guilt and deserve punishment, then man is not a moral agent, and we are not living under a moral government. And this, I think, will seem to us all still harder to believe.

It is needless to point out to you that Scripture uniformly attaches to sin the idea of guilt. As a matter of fact, men do universally and invariably suffer for sin, and it would be inconsistent with the justice of God to suppose that He would inflict or permit suffering without guilt.

But "sin is the transgression of the law." Where no law is, there is no sin. And sin is imputed in the judgment of God in reference to the law which each man possesses. By the law of God, in such measure as it has been declared to each man, will that man be tried at the last. His own conscience will be the witness, and the perfect justice of God will herein be vindicated, that none will be condemned, except those who are convicted by the judgment of their own hearts.

Nor is this principle anything new or incon-

sistent with the universal order of things under the government of God. We ought not to wonder that a moral being, in departing from the law of his moral nature, should suffer as a necessary consequence. If all the rest of God's creatures, animal and material, are spared from suffering, considered as a punishment, it is because they keep the law of their being. If we could conceive of any order of creatures departing from the prescribed track, and violating their natural instinct, should we not look for loss, suffering, and even destruction, as an inevitable consequence?

So, then, sin, the transgression of the law, makes man guilty in the sight of God, and liable to the penalty prescribed by the Law.

Once more; sin implies *Pollution*. This characteristic of sin was communicated to the Jews by Divine revelation; it is the correlative of that attribute of God which we call holiness. No other religion or philosophy, as far as we know, has ever expressed these ideas. They were given, in the first place, to the Jews,—they have been retained, enlarged, and spiritualized, in the Gospel.

Under the notion of impurity or pollution in

relation to the holiness of God, ascribed to mankind by revelation, and admitted by the conscience, is expressed this simple essential condition of sin, that it disqualifies man for holding intercourse with God. He cannot exist in His presence; he cannot find in communion with God that which should be the chief happiness of his being.

I have said that this consequence of sin is admitted by the conscience of humankind. And the defilement and deformity of sin, its essential antagonism to the character of God, will be more apparent to us in proportion as we grow like Him in spirit, see things from His point of view, and judge things by His standard; that is, in proportion as our conscience speaks truth and bears faithful witness to His law.

And now let me shortly recapitulate what I have said to you on this subject. Every one of you has a law given him by God Himself, and a faculty especially provided to apprehend and declare that law. You are responsible for the use you make of this faculty—your conscience.

The transgression of God's law is sin.

It is your sin which separates between you and God, which makes you shrink from Him in fear, which makes Him turn from you in displeasure.

Your sin, being the breach of God's law, renders you liable to a penalty, and guilty in the judgment of God.

And whereas it is your proper end and destiny, as a man, to be like God, to live in His presence, and to be happy in it, your sin makes you altogether unlike God, altogether unlovely in God's sight, incapable of existing in His presence, much more of finding there your true happiness.

Let me urge you to ponder this subject—to compare the uniform language of the Bible with the voice of your heart, and see if this is not the truth. And if it is true, see what a serious matter it is; how every act of your daily life may be tried, and will be tried, by a positive law of God. Consider that you have the means of testing your actions by this law, and that your standing in relation to God depends on the fidelity with which you do this.

Learn to judge truly between right and wrong; learn that every transgression of God's

law is *sin* ; call it by its right name ; judge of all your habits, acts, words, thoughts, as God judges them, sinful or not sinful. Refuse all other tests and standards, decline all arbitrary and conventional measures of right and wrong, suspect that false and treacherous compromise with the world that represents one fault as mean and degrading, another as manly and generous. Settle it once for all that every transgression of the law is sin, and that all sin, in the sight of God and of good men, is hateful, offensive, fatal.

SERMON IV.

DEATH.

1 COR. xv. 26.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

IF we wish to know the truth about ourselves, we must overlook nothing either in nature or revelation which is likely to help us, and we must do our best to give the right interpretation to the facts and the statements which are presented to us.

Certainly we must not overlook the great fact of *death*.

You might, indeed, suppose that a Christian minister is in little danger of losing sight of a subject which furnishes materials for so many solemn reflections, so many serious warnings, so many lessons of humility, repentance, faith, and hope.

Yet it is possible that the real importance of the subject, its full value as a lesson of truth, may not be sufficiently acknowledged. For to

those who are intent upon studying and mastering the few broad facts about themselves which it most concerns them to know, those who with this view are resolved to compare the professed declaration of God Himself with the *facts*, moral or material, which they recognise in and about themselves, I know of nothing so directly instructive, or so highly important, as this great phenomenon—this universal law of *Death*.

That an immortal soul, with capacities for the divine life itself, should have been allied, by a union too intimate and subtle for human science to analyse, with a body liable to *pain, sickness, decay, dissolution*, is a thought at once utterly perplexing to the philosopher, and overwhelming to the heart of the natural man. In fact, if it were not that men have the power to withdraw their thoughts from that which gives them pain, the certain expectation of death would be enough to paralyse human life and energy. And the courage with which men meet their death, is in very many cases the result of mere indifference, and a determination not to reflect on that which is before them. It becomes you therefore to give the subject a definite and a prominent place in your thoughts,

to apprehend its true importance, what is its relation to human nature, what its connexion with sin, what it is to the natural man, what to the renewed man in Christ.

The Bible gives this prominence to the subject of death. It is in the Old Testament represented as the great evil of our race, surrounded with the ideas of pain and uncleanness, disgrace and despair. And the alleged object of our Saviour's incarnation is "that He might taste *death* for every man." He took not on Him the nature of angels, so the apostle argues in Heb. ii., because it was not for angels that He came to do His work of compassion; but He took the nature of *man*, went through it and made it His own from first to last, from birth to death, that He might be enabled at once to sympathize completely with us, and by His own death to deliver us who are in bondage through fear of death.

I need say no more as to the importance of this subject.

Now let us see how it stands in relation to human nature. We all see that, as we are now constituted, it is a universal law. Even the Lord Jesus Christ, the type and the head of humanity, was subject to it. But is it a part

of the perfect idea of mankind?—was man, as he came from the hand of the Creator, the last and best of His works, made in His own image—was he subject to this condition? or is it an attribute of the fallen nature of man, only one of the consequences of sin, that is, essentially connected with *sin*, but not essentially, only accidentally, and for a certain time and purpose, connected with *man*?

This is a glorious truth, if only we could persuade ourselves that it is a truth. This is liberty indeed—a worthy result even in this present time, of the death of the Captain of our salvation.

Think what a load is taken off the heart of humankind when this truth is apprehended. We are all living under a thick, black cloud. What a light breaks in upon us as we recognize the voice of God proclaiming that the temporary usurpation of death is over—that the stranger who has so long mightily oppressed us, is himself at last destroyed, and that we are free!

Death has ever been a subject of wonder and perplexity to thinking men, before the revelation of Jesus Christ made all plain. The

patriarchs and other servants of God "all died in faith," not understanding how to reconcile this law with the hope of better things which God had given them, but content to wait till He, in His good time, should show them the truth. Wise men among the heathen submitted in melancholy resignation, or murmured in secret rebellion, against a dispensation which strangely and unaccountably reversed the natural order of creation, and degraded man, the lord of all, to a position lower than the beasts of the field.

The *truth*, as we learn it from the word of God, is short, simple, and satisfactory. Death, as death is known to us, is no essential part of man's true nature; (you remember that the true nature of man is God's own likeness). It is the necessary consequence of sin—all, at least, that is painful, fearful, shameful in death is derived immediately from sin. And so the work of mercy, which does away with sin, destroys its guilt, its power, its existence in man, naturally and of necessity destroys death also.

This essential connexion of *death* with *sin* is declared very plainly in Scripture. God said

to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And St. Paul, alluding to this passage, says (Rom. v. 12), "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." It was attached to sin by God's decree, as its penalty, while, at the same time, it is its natural consequence. For this is the ordinary method of God's justice, that the punishment follows the offence naturally and of course.

If there are any who question the truth of this statement of Holy Scripture, especially in so far as death is represented in the light of a penalty, they must suppose that death was in the world before sin, and that in this respect, at least, we are as God made us at the first, and that it is no sign of degradation or ruin that we follow the law of the whole animal creation.

Undoubtedly *death* was in the world before man existed: the crust of the earth is a perfect cemetery of the animal kingdoms of earlier dispensations. The very fact that God, when He enacted the first law for man, pronounced death to be the penalty of transgression, seems to involve the truth that death was then a known and familiar phenomenon. But the question is, was man created subject to this law—were

we intended to *die*; or have we brought this terrible condition upon us by our own transgression?

They who believe that death is an essential condition of mankind, evidently regard man only as the highest class of animals hitherto created; and on that supposition they see nothing unnatural or unreasonable in the belief that he is subject to all the conditions of mere animal life. But they do not observe that in this respect his position is not at all the same as that of the mere animal. Fallen as he is, as a matter of fact, death is not to him what it is to the ox or the ass. He has something within which rebels against its power, which protests against its usurpation, and so daily and hourly testifies that death has no right to have dominion over him.

The poor dumb brute knows nothing of this feeling: except the mere instinct of self-preservation, it feels nothing in the anticipation of death; the fear of death does not disquiet it, the sight of death does not move it. God has permitted man to take its life freely to supply his own ordinary wants.

How different is it with man, the moral

being!—how variously is he affected by the thought or the sight of death!

One is stricken with terror, another is hardened into brutality; one moved to pity, another stirred to acts of savage cruelty. And all these different effects upon the soul, while they are consistent with the belief that death is a punishment for transgression, a consequence of our own sin, loudly deny that it is natural to man as he was, and as he is to be. That which terrifies, that which brutalises, that which inflicts the most poignant grief, can be no part of a work which God pronounced to be “very good.” He did not make man with capacities for divine life in order that he might feel a more exquisite and subtle torment at being subject to the worst condition of the animal life. You might as well point to the imprisoned lark, beating herself against the bars of her cage, and say that this is her natural condition, that she has never known a higher or a nobler law of being.

Then, lastly, what is the difference in this respect between the restored child of God and the mere child of Adam? How has the death of Jesus Christ, the head and representative of

human kind, affected the relations of death towards us? For we see that all are alike still subject to this law of the animal life. We see that wise men die as well as the ignorant and foolish; the saint must go through that last struggle as well as the sinner and the infidel, and the flesh shrinks from it and rebels at it in the one case as much as in the other. Where lies the difference?

The difference lies in this: It is a fearful thing for man to pronounce the sentence of God—to speak of those judgments which are for eternity. But so it is, for God Himself has said it. The difference lies in this: to the ungodly, to those who will not have God for their God, who will not accept His offer of mercy and reconciliation, who *choose death*, in the words of Moses,—choose, that is, to live as animals and die as animals, the death of the body is also the death of the soul: not merely the sign or emblem of it, but identical with it. The sentence includes both. It is the final determination of the state of those who choose to live without God and under God's displeasure; not altogether a new state of being for them, but a confirmation for eternity of that state

which they have here in their time of probation deliberately preferred. And however we may interpret the expressions of Holy Scripture which tell of the worm and the fire, the wailing and the gnashing of teeth—if we should regard death with some as only a final and eternal separation from God, or with others as utter annihilation, it is a thought which, if we have any worthy estimation of the soul and its proper destiny, may well fill us with unutterable dismay, and make our whole life a bondage.

On the other hand, to the child of God, death is also the seal and settlement for ever of the life that he now lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God; it is His formal admission to the full enjoyment of that state as the child of God, which is his now only in expectation; it is his birthday into the real human life: and, inasmuch as it is the gate by which his Lord, the Head of his race, the Captain of his salvation, passed before him, it has lost for him all that could terrify or degrade. There is neither fear nor shame in the Christian's death. Death hath no more dominion over him. As it was not possible for Jesus Christ "to be holden of death," so you may be assured that you too, if

you are indeed members of Christ's body, shall not be holden of it. You are God's freedmen; what enemy of God shall dare to lay hands on you or claim you as his?

Let me remind you of what I have already pointed out for your attention, how clearly marked this distinction is from one end of the Bible to the other—how changed the aspect of death for us since Christ died.

In the Old Testament it is associated with guilt, with defilement, with terror; it is the symbol of final doom, of mere despair,—“the soul that sinneth it shall die,” is the language of the law of God to the natural man; thus at once declaring that death is the natural end of sin, and sin the parent of death. And this view of death is especially presented to us in the death of Christ, because it was death as a penalty, death as the expression of a curse, that He came to taste for every man. Accordingly no death was ever surrounded with more suffering, shame, and agony, than the death of that blessed One.

And the effect to us is that the suffering, the shame, the terror, is taken away—the sting of death is gone. Observe the tone of the Apostles in speaking of a Christian's death; observe how

naturally, in their ordinary discourse, almost unconsciously they exhibit that idea of death which their Divine Master had given them by anticipation. Henceforth, with a tenderness and delicacy that may be felt more readily than described, death is a falling asleep, an entering into rest; or, if the word itself must be used, it is accompanied with a blessing that takes all its harshness away. The last enemy that shall be (wholly) destroyed is death—yet even now, “from henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

You have other opportunities of being reminded of what you owe to God, and how you may best show the sincerity of your love. Let these remarks help you to recognize and appreciate the privilege to which you are aspiring when you come in person to claim your place in the Church, as members of Christ and children of God.

You are asserting your true position among God's creatures as being made in God's likeness. You are claiming the rights of which sin has for a time deprived you. You are protesting against the usurpations of sin; and you are openly casting off the yoke of death, as of a

tyrant whose rod and staff is broken, who can no longer hurt you or have dominion over you.

May God give you grace to live as becomes His children; may the love of Christ constrain you to give your love to Him who loved you, and who has delivered you out of such bondage into such freedom. And may the Holy Spirit shed abroad the Divine life in your hearts, that you may grow daily in likeness to your Creator, and become daily more meet to take possession of your glorious inheritance.

SERMON V.

REDEMPTION.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

"I determined not to know anything among you, save
Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

If you have given your attention to the subject which I have lately placed before you; if you have thought with due seriousness of God, as He has revealed Himself to us; of yourselves, as your own conscience describes you; of sin, as the actual fault and plague of our race; of death, as its inevitable consequence; you cannot let the subject rest there. You cannot hear of such a God, inviting you to be His heirs and His children, and not desire,—nay, resolve to accept the invitation. You cannot acquiesce in this present debased, distorted condition of your nature, content to pine under this disease all your life, and die at last, if only you know how to arise, and walk and live.

And so you can understand the feelings of those who "waited for the consolation of Israel," who watched for the dawn of day throughout the long night of suspense that lay upon the world from the fall of the first Adam to the coming of the second. They heard the prophecies, they saw the types, and from both they gathered hope and strength; they believed that God would do as He had promised, that He would Himself provide a remedy for the disease of man, deliverance from his bondage.

They felt, as we must feel, that the nature of the remedy, the way of deliverance, was in God's hands. Infinite wisdom, and infinite love, would provide the means of recovery; and so, as the purpose of God was little by little unfolded, here in direct prophecy, there under typical acts or institutions, they eagerly and thankfully received it, and faithfully transmitted the accumulated treasure for the guidance and encouragement of their children.

And although we in these later days have the invaluable advantage of seeing at one view the whole completed dispensation of recovery, we must still receive it in the same spirit as they. Knowing how utterly unable we should

have been had we lived in their days, to divine what would be or ought to be the means devised for our salvation, it is but reasonable that we should receive it at the hand of God in thankful and unquestioning humility.

Inquiries which would have been manifestly unbecoming and unreasonable for them, are equally so for us.

We must not ask why God permitted sin, or made man capable of sin at the first, for this is not revealed to us, and we have no power given us by which we can discover it. We must not ask, why, having permitted man to be tried and to fall into sin, God did not at once and without reserve forgive him and restore him again to a state of innocence: why, in short, as the question has been stated, God should not forgive man, as man can sometimes forgive his brother. As a matter of fact, we know that He did not so forgive man, and we may be well content to leave that question alone, even though our reason and conscience may suggest some good reasons why the decree of God should be as it is.

Let us, then, give our best endeavours to understand that which has been well called the

mystery of redemption. The plan, and the work, and the revelation, are all from God. We must receive it through the medium of our understanding and conscience—let us try to receive it as it comes from Him, asking for it in simplicity, with faith and reverence, that it may not be perverted, nor contract anything false or impure in its passage to our hearts.

If it only reaches the heart in its full integrity, it will meet there an evidence which will confirm its truth to the least particular.

The work accomplished by God on man's behalf with a view to restore him to his forfeited place, is described under various figures in Holy Scripture.

It is *redemption*—the paying of a ransom to purchase back into liberty those who have been led captives.

It is *justification*—the establishment of a plea, by which those who are otherwise liable to conviction are pronounced clear of guilt and free from condemnation.

It is a *washing*, or cleansing from pollution, whereby those who are unholy and unclean, in relation to God, the measure of all holiness, are made pure in His sight.

Lastly, it is an *atonement*, an act of reconciliation, for the complete recovery of the original relation of love and friendship between those who have been estranged through the fault of mankind.

These, as I conceive, are the principal figures under which God's work of mercy in His Son is set before our minds in Holy Scripture. And it is very desirable, not only that you should, when you read the Bible, preserve a distinct view of each figure as it comes before you, and see how each most truly describes the great gift of God, but that you should also be able to combine these aspects of the same truth, and learn the full meaning of the great work which comprehends them all.

And so, if there is a doubt on our minds as to the means by which Christ achieved our salvation—the act on which the whole work must be considered to hinge, it will help us to resolve this doubt, if we consider wherein we can reasonably believe all these benefits are to be found together.

How, and when, and where, did the Son of God pay a ransom for our souls, and supply us with a plea, on which we could claim acquittal

from the penalty of guilt, and purify our souls from the stains of sin, and make atonement between us and our God ?

No doubt these results all together point to the *death* of Christ, and confirm the uniform declaration of Scripture to the same effect.

I say that Holy Scripture uniformly refers to the effects described under these figures, as produced directly by the *death* of Christ ; and this is the truth—the vital truth—which I desire to urge upon you at this time.

You will say, “Why should this be questioned?” Indeed it is hard to say, for they who dispute it have never succeeded in suggesting a more reasonable plan of salvation : but it is, and always has been, questioned ; the *offence of the cross* was the great hindrance to the Gospel even in St. Paul’s days, and it is so now. “Christ crucified,” which was to St. Paul, as he says in the text, the central point from which his life-giving doctrine radiated into the whole world, was then to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; it is still offensive to the self-righteous, and contemptible to the theorist ; nevertheless, it is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

There are those in our time who will refer our salvation rather to any other cause connected with the Son of God than to His death. One rests on the fact of His taking our nature, another on the perfect obedience of His holy life. It is the fashion of such teachers to dwell little on His death, and to divest it of all that makes it the great object of interest to us.

Let us go and inquire of the Lord ; let us question the Lord's word.

See what lessons are taught in the Old Testament about the work of restoration,—how far the ancient people of God were led towards the apprehension of the great mystery. Here I must shortly repeat what I have often before dwelt on in this place.

They knew that they were living under a God of order, whose commandments were their *law*.

They knew that the transgression of God's law was regarded in His sight as *sin*.

They had been taught what sin is in His sight, by His attaching to it the uniform penalty of DEATH.

They were encouraged to look forward with confidence to the arrival of one of their own

race, who should deliver them from *sin* and *death*.

Meantime, under a dispensation which they felt and knew to be only for a time, the appointed way of deliverance was indicated to them in the wonderful and most expressive practice of sacrifice,—a practice sanctioned, at least, by God's approval from the earliest times, and afterwards directly appointed by Him as the only means by which He was to be approached by men.

And what is sacrifice? It is at once an acknowledgment that the offerer has made himself liable to a penalty for sin, and the payment of a *life* in the way of satisfaction.

That this is the true idea of sacrifice might be gathered from the very earliest examples of the practice that are recorded in Scripture, and it is expressly declared in the account given of the sacrifices appointed by God in the service of the tabernacle.

Put together the following short and simple propositions, which every one must admit to be based on the surest warrant of Scripture,—

Sin is the transgression of the law.

Death is the penalty for sin. “The soul

that sinneth it shall die," is the fundamental principle of the whole law according to St. Paul.

Sacrifice is enjoined, (1) on the occasion of sin, (2) to make atonement for sin.

The blood is the life of the animal.

The life is in every case to be taken, and in no other way than by the shedding of blood.

From these few and simple truths, the conclusion seems to me irresistible, that in the act of sacrifice there is, as above stated, an admission on the part of the offerer that his own life is forfeit, and a substitution, under certain conditions, of another life in its place.

Is this, too, questioned? you will say.

Indeed it is openly denied; and we are expected to be satisfied, when we ask the import of this strange and significant institution, with the answer that it is only an emblem of self-dedication—an offer, under a figure, of the life and service of the sacrificer—as if the infliction of death, by shedding of blood, was the most appropriate symbol of the devotion of a life to God's service. *With your Bibles open*, you will not be contented with any such evasion of a great and serious truth. "The soul that

sinneth, it shall die;" "The priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins, before the Lord," are texts that do not stand alone, but fairly represent the central idea of the law of Moses—the point at which the moral and ceremonial laws unite: they give us the true meaning of sacrifice, and are not to be explained away.

Nor are we to regard this inner principle and intention of sacrifice as obsolete, as superseded by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is, on the contrary, the elementary statement of an essential truth, which is only more fully embodied and revealed in the great final sacrifice of the Cross. The life of bulls and of goats, indeed, ceased to be offered when that life which they represented had been once for all given for sin; but the true principle of sacrifice is to us precisely what it was to Abel, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses.

Caiaphas was the unconscious and involuntary exponent of a great truth; he supplied the key to the doctrine of all the first dispensation, when he reminded the Council that it was expedient that one man should die for the

people, although the full apprehension of this truth was not given even to the Apostles till all was done, and their hearts were opened by Christ to understand the Scriptures.

Still more clearly, however, is it revealed in the Scriptures of the New Testament that the *death* of Christ is that from which the gift of redemption, and all its consequences, take their rise.

We are "*justified* by the blood of Christ;" we are "*washed* from our sins in His blood;" He came to "give His life a *ransom* for many;" God hath set forth Him to be "*a propitiation* through faith in His blood."

These passages are but samples of many which might be cited to the same purpose; and in them all the great benefits that we look for at God's hands are distinctly attributed to the operation of Christ's death.

Add to this the more studied and elaborate argument of Heb. ii., to the effect that, in carrying out God's purpose for the salvation of man, it was fitting that Christ should take man's nature, in order "that He might taste death for every man."

What conclusion can we form, other than

that which our Church has formed as to the work that Christ came to do ?

He came to represent man before the mercy-seat, to make satisfaction for sin, the transgression of the law, to pay the ransom and set us free. If you are told that it is an unworthy thought of God that He cannot forgive until satisfaction has been made and the penalty paid,—in short, that He should require death for sin, your answer is again and again, He does require death. **MAN DIES.** And so long as the written word stands which, as we have seen, connects redemption, purification, justification, and atonement, directly and specifically, with the shedding of the life-blood of Jesus Christ, the truth which I contend for is established ; it was necessary to make satisfaction for a broken law—death was the only satisfaction which God would accept. Christ was made man that He might die. It was, indeed, the original ideal nature of man which he took, not corrupted by sin, and so not in itself liable to death. And his death was purely voluntary, because it was for others' sins that He died. His death is our redemption, restoration, life.

Hold fast to this truth—never consent to

exchange it for any superficial theory, though it may be presented to you in the shape and under the phraseology of a more profound wisdom. That is the highest, deepest, broadest philosophy, which makes allowance for the height, and depth, and breadth of all things with which the Infinite and Eternal God has to do—the unfathomable depths of His love and the infinite perfection of His holiness. The method which reconciles these, as the blessed truth of Christ's atonement, is a reasonable method; the system which fails to do this, however it may be recommended by either ingenious reasonings, or by the still stronger persuasion of high moral excellence, is to be rejected as feeble, incomplete, and unsatisfying.

SERMON VI.

HOLINESS.

1 PET. ii. 9.

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

As I have on former occasions pointed out to you how sin is the disease of our nature, the real cause of our estrangement from God, and the consequent misery and disorder that prevails in our system, how death is the natural consequence and declared penalty of sin, and how we have been delivered from both by the voluntary offering of the Son of God; it seems to follow in a natural order that we should now consider the effects of redemption. If we have been reconciled to God, ransomed from death, washed from pollution, acquitted at the bar of infinite justice, what is by natural consequence our present condition?

Are we merely delivered from the fear of

punishment? Have we received a general license to live as we please and sin as we please?

You remember how indignantly St. Paul protests against any conclusion so unworthy, so unreasonable, so impossible. "God forbid: how can we that are *dead* to sin, live any longer therein?" The very object of redemption, the purposes for which God prepared the world in the schooling of the law and the prophets, was the restoration—the recovery of mankind from the condition into which they had fallen through sin. It was sin that placed man under His displeasure; sin that made man rebel against Him; and accordingly it was the total abolition of sin out of the moral world that was the very end and object of the whole work of Christ in our redemption.

So, although the immediate effect of Christ's death was to remedy the pressing evil—to remove the *guilt*; to take away the *curse*; to enable man to look up to God, to hear His voice, to feel and return His love; there were yet other benefits flowing from His death and in proper order consequent upon it, that were necessary to render His work complete.

Sin was not only to be pardoned—it was to be got rid of out of the world altogether. We may venture to say that God only pardons sin with a view to destroying it. It is another instance of the wonderful harmony of the Gospel system, the union of holiness and love, that the very condition annexed to free forgiveness is, that men shall sin no more; and the same act of mercy that sets them free from guilt, gives them the power to shake off the yoke of sin.

In other words, by the one act of the death of Christ on the cross, sin, as a breach of God's law, is forgiven—as the plague and infirmity of our hearts, is healed.

So we are redeemed unto holiness, and all that is said in the Scripture of the necessity of holiness, of the beauty of holiness, of the fervent desire which God's saints feel for holiness, may be summed up in this,—that holiness is the condition into which it was the purpose of God to restore men by His Son's death.

Let me make one or two remarks with a view to our clearer apprehension of this great truth.

1. We are, indeed, dull of hearing and slow

of heart when we come to speak of the things of God. The very idea of holiness in itself is incomprehensible to us; we can only imperfectly realise it as it is contrasted with sin. Our consciences testify that God is absolutely good; and the Scriptures teach us, as we follow the course of God's revelations to men, chiefly by signs, and always relatively to our own wills, and thoughts, and ways, what we are to understand by holiness.

It is an attribute which primarily belongs only to God: in a secondary sense to such of His creatures as are perfectly obedient to His law, and have their whole nature regulated by His will. Therefore, it does not properly belong to man [at all in his present condition. One man alone, the man Christ Jesus, the head and representative of His people, is holy as God is holy. By His mediation, sinful though we are, we are admitted to free intercourse with the most holy God, which under other conditions would be impossible.

But absolutely holy we are not, and shall not be while we are in the flesh, nor can we ever feel ourselves for a moment independent of that

means of communication with the source of our holiness and true life.

2. Yet we are capable of holiness, intended to be holy as God is holy, perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. In spite of sin we have left in us all that is required for the exercise of the spiritual life in perfection; and the removal of sin would leave us free to enjoy that life. The conscience, the will, the feelings, the affections, all are here, but all are out of order, working against one another, and, above all, working away from God, the Author of the soul's true harmony.

But we feel that all may be set right, has been set right for us by the work of Christ, and not only that holiness is a state to which we may attain, but that now, as the redeemed of God, it is our normal, our natural state. Never let it be said that the doctrine of grace, the true voice of the Gospel, gives us a humiliating, discouraging view of our state as men, and our relation with God. If the Gospel bids us look on our *natural* condition as utterly lost, helpless, and corrupt, there is no limit to the hopes and the aspirations which it offers to the *renewed*

man. If we are right in believing that mankind was made at the first without sin in the likeness of God, and that in the loss of this likeness by the introduction of sin, the true ideal of man has been lost for a time, then I am justified in bidding you look to a condition of perfect holiness—a state in which sin shall be unnatural and impossible to you—as that for which God has designed you, for which you have even now the capacity, and for the certain attainment of which Christ has provided you the means. And, after all, the Christian, when he shall have attained to such a condition, will only have realised the true, original idea of *man*. Surely the dignity of human nature is in no danger of being forfeited or disparaged by a system which offers to it such a prospect, and assigns it such a place.

And, as the attainment of perfect holiness is pointed out to us as possible and natural, as being simply the fulfilment of God's purpose, and the restoration of His original design, so is it directly exemplified for us in the person of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of His people, and their representative in the presence of God. We are encouraged to believe that we are par-

takers of His Spirit, so intimately united to Him, that we derive our very life from Him as our Head—that He is the firstborn of many brethren, that it is the purpose of the Father through Him to bring many sons to glory. Christ, in being a man without sin, was no more than perfect man ; if we are to be restored to the true ideal of mankind, we too must be made like Him.

But I said above, that in this life we cannot attain to perfect holiness—that part of Christ's work is not to be completed till we have put off this body of death. This life is, indeed, the time assigned for the process of sanctification, and as long as it lasts we may be sure that the work is not finished,—there is still something to be done.

Yet, for the encouragement of the Church in general, there are always some in whom the work seems almost complete, in whom we almost venture to say that Christ even now sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

To all it is a gradual process—a work—a growth. Perfection is the end in view, but it is attained by small, and well-nigh imperceptible, degrees. We have to work on little things.

Sin is the transgression of the law—and it is of all kinds—so that, for the attainment of holiness, we have to strive, not only against the master-sin, whatever it may be, but against every passion and every practice, however trifling it may appear in the judgment of men, which our conscience pronounces to be displeasing in God's sight,—and conscience becomes more exact in its inquiries, and more severe in its judgment, as we advance.

It is not the mere power and habit of controlling sin, which we look for as the result of sanctification; rather, it is so to acquire the very mind and character of Christ Himself, as by a natural instinct to shrink from sin, as animals shrink from that which is destructive of their life, to be restless and uneasy under its influence, indignantly to protest against its presence, to rise against it and drive it out.

It has been already observed, that the attainment of holiness is an essential part of the work of grace wrought by God in the Gospel by His Son Jesus Christ. And therefore, as we might expect, we find this purpose of God unfolded side by side, *pari passu*, so to speak, with the notion of pardon by means of sacrifice.

In other words, the justification and the sanctification of the people of God, distinct works as they are, are yet inseparably and essentially united in the counsel of God and in the revelation of mercy.

Thus, in those parts of the Old Testament which tell of sacrifice, priesthood, atonement, we read also of selection, separation, purification, set forth with equal emphasis and distinctness. The choice of Abraham and his seed; the marvellous manner in which they were, by the providence of God, kept separate from all other nations in Canaan, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and again in the Promised Land; the further separation of a tribe and a family for the priesthood, with all the ceremonial injunctions to purity and cautions against defilement:—these subjects occupy so large and so prominent a place in the books of the law, that we may with equal truth describe it as a Revelation of Pardon or a Revelation of Holiness.

3. Let us now observe, that as we are so constituted as to be ultimately capable of holiness, and as the purpose of God in His mercy is that we should be holy, so, on the other hand, we have no power in ourselves by

which we can attain to such a condition. All history is a confession of this. Justification and sanctification are alike the gift of God. He gives us pardon by the agency of Christ—holiness by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

And the one work is the natural complement of the other. The work of redemption would otherwise be imperfect. The Lord not only says to each of us, as He said to the lame man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but He adds, "Go, and sin no more." And He gives the power we need for the renewal of our spiritual life. To Him we must look not only for the full forgiveness of past sin, but for grace to sin no more. He alone can supply out of His own fulness that which we want—*the Life*, to make our whole moral nature work according to the original design, and keep time truly with the perfect will of God.

Here, then, is the work of your life before you: to invite and to welcome the Spirit of Christ into your hearts, that henceforth there may be in you a sure and steady progress towards that perfect holiness which is your true condition as restored men,—a condition in which sin is unwelcome, unnatural, impossible.

In all men this is a gradual process, in most men a painful one ; and the full attainment of what they are seeking seems to the end very far off. Yet there are always some to be found in the Church—perhaps never more than in these our own days—eager, ardent spirits, taking the kingdom of heaven by force, pressing towards the mark, hastening unto the day of the Lord, in which the chief delight they anticipate is, that they will be like their Master, for they shall see Him as He is.

Even now all who love the Lord know enough of the blessedness of being like Him and near Him, to make them long for the day when there will be nothing to separate them from Him. They are impatient under the attempts of sin to reassert its power over them : they feel the necessity of holiness to their very life.

Most of you, indeed, have yet to become better acquainted with the falsehood, the foulness, the tyranny of sin, before you feel that intense hatred of it, and that hearty longing to be rid of it for ever, which men of larger spiritual experience feel every day of their lives. Sin is still attractive to you, and there-

fore still dangerous. The heat of the trial is yet before you. Only be true to the service you have taken, and your Master will be true to you.

And be true to yourselves. Forget not your rights, and the real dignity of your nature.

You are a chosen generation. Show yourselves worthy of Him who chose you to be His children.

You are a royal priesthood. See that you are clothed with righteousness, as God's priests must be.

You are a holy nation, a peculiar people. Be ye therefore holy as God is holy, that in your persons and lives you may "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

SERMON VII.

LIFE.

ROM. v. 10.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

WE are prepared to hear of *Life* as the consummation of the gifts of God in the Gospel. Death is the inevitable fruit of sin; they entered the world together, they reigned together, they have been expelled together, and life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. The outward form of death does indeed remain, but its sting is gone; the rod of the oppressor is broken, its power to terrify is taken away. The body will decay, and the soul must depart out of it; but the soul departs to be with Christ, which is far better, and the body submits to dissolution for a little time until the day of the Lord come.

So that this is no real interruption of that conscious life of the spirit which the Christian enjoys by virtue of his union with Christ, the Head of the whole Body: we are under a dispensation of life.

Let us try to connect the ideas of holiness and life, as we already connect the ideas of sin and death. Even if our own consciences would let us evade this latter truth, the word of God sets it before us with a force and a clearness which we cannot escape. The whole law speaks of it; the very office of the law was to make man know what sin is, and that death is the consequence of sin. It is a sorrowful truth, but it was a truth which it was necessary for men to know before they could receive the salvation of God; and stern as the teaching of God was, long as the course through which the world had to pass, one is sometimes tempted to doubt whether the lesson was sufficiently learnt after all.

Still to us, this natural and essential association of sin and death is a familiar truth, and we have no difficulty in making it our own.

And if we do not so completely recognize the corresponding association of holiness and life, it

is not because the Bible is less explicit on this point, but because we are weak of faith and slow of heart to understand the truth, and to go in and possess the inheritance to the borders of which God Himself leads us.

The Bible is explicit on this point. Christ is declared to have abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He has abolished death that we might be no longer subject to death ; He has introduced life that we might derive it from Him, share it with Him. Here is the double truth on which Christian philosophy is built.

See what the Scripture further says on this point. Observe how, beside and beyond the abolition of death, this active, energetic administration of life is made to be an essential part of the work of Christ.

You will remember that His death was voluntary. He had power to lay down His life ; it was the last and highest act of love to lay it down for His friends ; being free from sin, He was not liable to the penalty of sin, it was only as our substitute—let me say it with reverence—that He *could* die. He died for us that we might not die ; He took His life again

that we might have life from Him, with Him, in Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I live," writes St. Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;" and again, "He died that we should live together with Him."

And the truth is brought out with particular emphasis in the passage which I have chosen as my text, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." How saved by His life? Surely not, as some have read it, by the life of Christ in the flesh—by the obedience, the holiness, the sufferings of those thirty years of bondage endured by Him for us. We, indeed, call that His life, because we have no better way of expressing what we mean—because the natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit of God; but in a truer and higher sense, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ began when He rose in His glorified human body, victorious over His enemies, the Deliverer of the race of His adoption.

It is this life of Christ by which we are

saved—from the now living Christ we draw our true life. In the narrative of the early history of the Church, we read in a certain place, that “the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved”—more correctly, such as were in the way to be saved—that is, they were already pardoned, washed, justified, or whatever term we choose to express absolute forgiveness of sin and remission of the penalty; their actual condition was that they were on the way to complete salvation, by virtue of the life of Christ, of which the Holy Ghost made them partakers; being “saved by His life.” I do not wish to suppress, or to put out of sight, all that class of blessings which Christians derive from their communion *with* Christ—dying with Him, rising again with Him, living with Him and in Him—I am only careful to point out, as I find it in Scripture, that this is altogether distinct from the benefit we derive from Christ having died *for* us. Admit this first, that all comes from Christ’s *death*, as we have admitted it, and we are then ready to go on, and insist as strongly on the necessity of partaking in Christ’s life.

But we must learn to feel the reality and

the dignity of our standing as Christians ; as being in the number of such as shall be saved ; as being actually delivered from death, actually partakers of that life which has proved itself, in the person of Jesus Christ, superior to death. This spiritual life, let us claim it, enjoy it, give it full scope. It is true that it is here hampered and impeded by the opposition of the flesh, but it has nothing in common with the flesh ; it cannot dwell with sin, it has no fear of death. God, indeed, would not save, except on the condition of holiness, and the attainment of holiness is a gradual and a painful process. If the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, it may well be that we must be brought to glory through the same discipline ; hence the uncongenial, unnatural alliance of the regenerate soul with mortal flesh—hence the imprisonment of spirit within the body—hence the liberation of the living man only by the gate of death.

Is it possible for language to bring out this truth more vividly than that of St. Paul, when, after dwelling on the bitter conflict which was ever going on within him, between Christ and Satan, holiness and sin, life and death, he sums

up all with that cry from his inmost heart,—have none of us ever uttered it?—“ Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

Or when, again, he declares that in the case of all Christians this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruption must put on incorruption ? or when, in that grandest of all expressions of faith, his soul breaks out for the fervent desire he hath for the time when the struggle shall be over, the spirit shall be wholly triumphant, and “ mortality shall be swallowed up of life ? ”

In fact, when I ask you to mark this great truth on your memory and your heart, I am but urging you to give heed to that which holds a very prominent place in the whole system of the Gospel as it is declared by St. Paul. What else is the meaning of those well-known words, “ Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over Him : for in that He died, He died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord ?* ” It is the

now living Christ from whom we draw our life. "*Being made perfect*, He became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him."

Being satisfied, then, that your actual condition is one of life, as contrasted with the state of death in which you would be but for the death of Christ accomplished, and the life of Christ now continuing to work in you by His Spirit; reflect further that your life is derived from Christ: there is no way but this. He does all for us, lives for us as well as died for us. As our High Priest, the representative of mankind, He ever liveth in the presence of God, receives for us the light and the life of the Godhead, and transmits them to our souls by sending to us the Holy Ghost. He lives for us, as He died for us, and yet we must live with Him, as, if we are Christians, we have died with Him.

No other existence or energy than that which flows from union with Him by faith, can satisfy the conditions of our true nature, or fulfil its capacities. There is in every one of us a power of animal existence for threescore years and ten, with every variety of natural endowments, physical, intellectual, and moral. But a Chris-

tian does not call this his *life*. Life is to him a word of higher meaning and wider reach than this. His life is the life of Christ, that which Christ now enjoys, and which he claims himself actually to possess even now. But it is only from Christ, only in Christ that it is to be found. Therefore seek it in Christ. Let your soul go out to seek it in Him.

The Lord Himself has taught us to use the ordinary processes of the natural world as emblems of spiritual things, signs by which we may interpret our own true inner life.

See how the living tree supports its life. How the innumerable fibres of its roots are for ever reaching out on all sides, penetrating to the heart of the earth, moved almost by a kind of instinct in the search for food and nourishment, while every leaf is all the time drinking in health and strength, and new material for life and growth, from the atmosphere which surrounds it.

So must it be with us, our souls must cleave to Christ, they must be rooted and grounded in Him, they must send out all their best feelings and finest affections to lay hold on Him, and to draw their life from Him. No formal act of

worship can do this, it is an actual permanent intercourse of spirit with spirit, a real communion with Christ and all the members of His body, in the Holy Ghost.

Reflect, again, that this life is ours *now*: understand your true present position, and live up to it. "If, when you were enemies you were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall you be saved by His life." If you are really partakers of the benefits of Christ's death, assure yourselves that you are also entitled now to the possession of that which flows to His Church from His life. He has not died for you without giving you the power to live with Him; if you have died with Him, be sure the same God who quickened Him has also quickened you; it is our want of faith which makes us speak and think so doubtfully of our state in this present time, representing all the blessings of the Gospel as future and uncertain.

When the people of God had been brought out of Egypt and over the Red Sea, and had seen all their enemies dead on the seashore, it is true they were not yet in possession of the land of promise, they had a weary road to tra-

verse, much to suffer, much to learn, before they reached it, and Jordan to pass at the end ; yet they were the people of God—they were a nation and a Church ; and of all the essential characteristics of the children of God, nothing was wanting, nothing was to be added by merely passing into Canaan ; only a fuller enjoyment of their privileges, a larger exercise of their love and duty, a more adequate expression of the new life and state which God had given them.

And this is our position. We are no longer, thank God, in the house of bondage ; our own Lord has looked upon us in our low condition, and left the glories of His Father's house to come and bear our yoke for us, and set us free. He has brought us out with a high hand, and executed a terrible vengeance—a complete overthrow—upon His enemies and ours. Sin and death lie powerless to harm us, and He is leading us on by the power of His own living Spirit towards the heavenly inheritance.

It is on a right understanding of such truths as these, and a hearty, thankful acceptance of the way of salvation which God has provided us, that our future salvation, and our present happiness, depend.

If men will persist in shutting their eyes to the truth—if they will form a false and incomplete conception of the God whom they have to worship—of their own real capacities, and become satisfied with things as they are, contented with such aims, such motives, such powers, as this wreck of man's nature seems to afford of itself, it is in vain to look for anything saintly or Godlike in their character, anything worthy of the true idea and original design of human nature.

A loose profession of faith, and a low standard of practice, must, in the main, be the result.

But you who believe in a holy God—who believe that you are intended to be holy as He is holy, who, while yet afar off, shut out for a time by a cruel usurpation from your rightful inheritance, yet feel that you are children and heirs of the Most High—you who know that sin is that intruder that has hid your Father's face from you for a time, and made you a wonder and a shame, even to yourselves, but that neither sin nor death has any right where they are; you who have seen the Son of God become man that He might die for you and destroy sin

and death; you who know and feel that He lives for you, and that your life is from Him and in Him—(one falls naturally into the way of St. Paul)—what need to tell *you* what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation? what need to tell you that you must keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection; that you must be pure in heart; that no corrupt communication must proceed out of your mouth; that you must be true, and chaste, and humble, and gentle; that you must rejoice evermore; that you must pray without ceasing; that you must in everything give thanks?

Recognize your true character in relation to God; believe that Christ died for you, and that you died with Him unto sin—that He now lives for you, and that your life is hid with Him in God; and there is no need of exact and elaborate directions for your conduct; with this life there is given an instinct to discern good and evil, and the life which you live by the faith of the Son of God, is no other than the very life of Christ in you, by which you are saved.

SERMON VIII.

THE DECISION.

Ps. cxix. 57.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord : I have said that I
would keep Thy words."

WHAT a perpetual struggle is this life for the servant of God ! How many times over has he occasion to say such words as these ! how many times to withdraw himself with an effort from contrary influences, remind himself that he has already made his choice, that it is no longer an open question with him, whose he is and whom he shall serve ! "Thou, Lord, art my portion. *I have said* that I would keep thy words."

Observe the twofold aspect in which the Psalmist regards his relation with God.

1. "Thou art my portion, O Lord."

The soul of man has its desires, affections, instincts, hopes ; and all these demand an

object in which they may rest and find their complete satisfaction. All are engaged in this search after that which they agree to call happiness; and the world offers a thousand objects to their choice, all making great pretensions, and all mere counterfeits, keeping their promise to the eye and breaking it to the hope. And some follow one object, some another; many pass their lives in a succession of experiments, trying every expedient that comes in their way, and confess their disappointment after all.

They only who take God for their portion are never disappointed. In Him they have an object of their love and worship that exceeds their very power of loving and adoration; in Him the complete and final fulfilment of all the hopes, desires, aspirations of their best and highest nature. The Psalmist may have spoken the words of the text in reference to the well-known decree of God, in which it was said to Aaron, "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them. I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." Let others take the corn and the wine, the cities and the fields, hill and valley, flock and herd.

God's priests have nothing to do with these. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, thou maintainest my lot."

The servant of God goes through life with many things, as many as other men, to invite him on this side and that. Blessed is the man, especially blessed is the young man, who when pleasure entices him, or when a path opens out for him to fame and worldly honour, can recollect himself, and refrain his soul, and say, "Thou, Lord, art my portion, my soul has made its choice; I am satisfied. I have no wish to choose again." Thus, then, (1) the Psalmist is expressing the settled resolution of the man who has taken God as his portion for ever.

2. He speaks also of moral obligation. Not only has he deliberately preferred the Lord and His service for the satisfaction of his heart's desires and affections, but he is bound and pledged to His service. "*I have said, that I would keep thy words.*" This is the expression of a very different feeling, of a simple sense of duty, as we commonly speak. For there are times and circumstances in which even the best and strongest servants of God have to fall

back upon this, when they lose for a time the sense of delight, and even satisfaction, in the service of God, and the possession of God, so to speak, for their portion. He seems to be hiding His face from them, and to have forgotten them. Though, I say, in general, and certainly in the long run, God's children have the happiest and brightest life on earth, yet they have their days of darkness and of weakness. Then if they are tempted to forsake the Lord, and look for happiness apart from Him and away from Him, they have still this thought to withhold them. "I have said that I would keep thy word; I have sworn and am steadfastly purposed."

This is the twofold purport of the Psalmist's words :—

I will not look anywhere else for my happiness. "The Lord is my portion."

I may not serve another God, or do things displeasing to my God.

"I have said, I would keep His words."

The first thing I recommend to your consideration in this passage is, the advantage of *decision*. Even in the ordinary affairs of life, you all know what a satisfaction it gives to the

mind, what strength and character to the conduct, to have made up your mind. It is such a relief to be rid of the doubts and hesitation that have harassed you, and to have your end and your course fairly before you.

And just as in any particular case it is a sensible relief and a sure source of strength to have your mind made up, so the habit of deciding firmly, and acting on your decisions, is that which more than any other thing makes and marks a strong character. As a rule of worldly wisdom merely, it is one of the first laws for the regulation of conduct in going out into the world. Let there be some points at least settled in your mind. Act, and let the world see that you act, in these things as one who has made his decision. There will always be matters enough in which every man must use his judgment as the case occurs; many questions left open to the very end, which may and which must be settled according to the circumstances of the hour. But every one of you should have your choice made, finally, irrevocably on some points; some questions no more open questions: if it is not so, you must give up all hope of real moral power or influence, you must take

your place with the many who are led or driven by the few.

And of all points, the one on which you must have your mind made up; of all questions, the one that must not be left an open question, is this of the Psalmist. The law of Christ is a law of liberty; your tastes, your feelings, your inclinations, are left in a large and liberal degree unfettered; but when a case arises, such as that which may have called this ejaculation from the Psalmist, a case which involves the questions, "what are you, whose are you, to whom are you looking as the object of your love, faith, hope, worship?" you must be prepared with such words of quiet resolution as these, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: *I have said.*" As young men setting out to take your place, and play your part hereafter in the world, you must not hope for any real steadiness, strength, or dignity of character, you will never even be safe, without this.

Consider it in the twofold view I have already suggested. "Thou art my *portion.*" Look into your own hearts, and you will understand better than words can explain to you, what philosophers mean when they say that all

mankind are in search of something which they agree to call happiness. At this moment you are all looking forward to your next step in life, or to more distant steps, for pleasure, honour, liberty; and you know that you have besides something within you too deep to be fully realised or expressed—affections that refuse to be satisfied with any object you have yet found, or ever will find on earth: that, in fact, you must know, and possess, and love God, the true God, or the purpose of your being is missed, your highest, truest nature is not satisfied.

Then before you venture into the world, before you are exposed to the trial which you must pass through, when other objects will bid high for your affections, see and judge whether you can say in sincerity, "Thou, Lord, art my portion." To have God for your portion implies that you know Him, that you have chosen Him, that you are satisfied, that you are contented to forego all other objects of love and worship for His sake. To forego all else; observe this. These are the words of one who knew what it was to go against the stream, to lose much of pleasure and excitement, often to be left out of that in which he would fain have joined, and

whose only comfort was in reminding himself that the Lord was his portion.

If this is your profession too, and if you are going to be true to it, your next few years must be years of conflict, self-denial, patience, endurance; you will have to bear much, to forego much, and you must find your strength and comfort in this same reflection.

And it is not only the ordinary trial of your time of life that awaits many of you, and under which you will need all the strength of a mature resolution, and an engaged affection; some of you will have also to encounter the dangers and difficulties which attend of necessity a high standard of intellectual culture; and these are so great, that one is tempted sometimes to think that it would be better to withhold from one's children an advantage which is attended with conditions so perilous. But this would argue a want of faith in the word and Spirit of God, which can, and often does, make the brightest natural gifts of mind the channels of His grace.

Some of you who have learned to know God as He describes Himself to the ear of faith, whose understanding is satisfied with the reve-

lation, and, still more, whose conscience now testifies to its truth, will hereafter undoubtedly have other Gods offered to you as objects of worship. I say advisedly *other Gods*, because they who represent God otherwise than as He represents Himself, who offer you a totally different account of His character and relations with mankind, of His law and His requirements, are virtually inviting you to love, honour, and worship another God. I trust that your belief in the God whom you have hitherto known and served, whose word you have found to be true, is not a mere transient impression, to be effaced by the first wind of new doctrine which passes over it. I hope your affections are too much engaged to be hastily transferred to another, that you have so made Him your portion, that you will feel yourselves wronged, hurt, grieved, to have another proposed to you in His stead.

Realize the true God—whom to know is life eternal—the holy God, the just God, the ever-living personal Creator, Preserver, Judge, Saviour, the God in whose sight sin cannot remain, who is pledged to destroy it utterly and for ever, the God who only saves His people in

* making them perfectly holy ; keep the true idea of God fixed and settled in your understanding and in your heart, and remember how completely this, and this only, satisfies the questionings of your mind, and the deepest longings of your heart, and then say, *Thou art my portion, and none other : my soul has made its choice ; others may be still on the search, asking on all sides " Who will show us any good ? " I have found what I wanted ; I shall serve the Lord.*"

But your trial will be searching and severe. You will often have to fall back on the latter thought of the Psalmist, "*I have said.*"

There will be moments of passion when the fever of pleasure, the sudden, imperious impulse of sensual gratification, will altogether for a time silence the true voice of the heart, and make you forget the heart's true choice. Temptations will hurry you into sin, which in your calmer hours you would despise ; and at such moments the love of God in Christ may lose its hold on your affection, and you may feel inclined to murmur at the restraint instead of rejoicing in the happiness and honour of your portion. Yet remember, "*I have said.*"

And then, on the other hand, there will be

intellectual dangers for some of you. The simple faith of your childhood will be put to the test of comparison with new theories, brilliant fancies, and subtle speculations. You will hear it spoken of with contempt, as obsolete and unphilosophical, by those who direct the thoughts and opinions of your generation.

You are quite unable now to estimate the strength of this temptation. I have myself seen a whole generation of young men, educated and trained like yourselves, fairly swept away by the current of popular opinion, till they were beyond the help of sound judgment and right reason, and found too late to their dismay and despair that they were the victims of a mere delusion.

Let me hope that you will go out into the world so far at least established in the truth as not lightly to forsake it for a specious falsehood, so far satisfied with the service you have embraced as not to change your colours on the first temptation.

Remember that you have here in a solemn and public manner made your choice, with the full assent of your understanding and the deliberate approval of your conscience. You

have said that you would keep His word. It ought to be something more than the first sound of an eloquent voice, or the first enunciation of a plausible theory, to move you from such a position.

For the attainment of such ends, for your establishment in the Christian faith, I hope and believe that this past term has been of some service. Many of us, I think, will have reason ever hereafter to look back upon it as one of the happy and profitable passages of our lives. God has been giving you occasions for recollection, for thought, for feeling, for action : and I am bound to acknowledge, as I do with great thankfulness, that, as a body, you have not failed to take advantage of them.

It is God alone who directly and unerringly reads your hearts ; I can only judge in general, and from your outward behaviour. A high standard of conduct, a conscientious attention to daily work, indications frequently occurring of kindly feeling among yourselves, and the increasing interest of these happy services of ours, are all evidences not to be disregarded of a good principle at work among you, though they are only valuable in so far as they spring

from a work of the Holy Spirit in your souls, and a real, personal dedication of your hearts to God.

Most of you, I hope, will come back after the vacation to make further proof of your sincerity, and, with God's help, to take higher ground still. Some few are leaving us for other work and other trials, but not, I am sure, to forget this place, nor the lessons which God has taught them, nor the vows which they have made to Him here.

To all let this be the sum of the term's work. Forgetting for a time whatever else you have done, or learned, or gained, during this period, your bodily growth, your mental improvement, the healthy exercise of your affections, remember, each of you, that this is the time in which you *made your choice* and *took your service*.

Whatever happens, if all else in your life is left to the current of events, to chance, as men say, consider this as settled for ever. You have studied your own nature, its wants, its capacities, its eternal destinies: you have learned to know the true God, and His love to you in Christ; and you have deliberately chosen Him as the worthy object of your

worship, the only entire satisfaction of your wants.

This question is settled. "Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Thy words."

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